

The Anatomy of Loneliness

How to find your way back to connection



TEAL SWAN



Teal Swan was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with a range of extrasensory abilities, including clairvoyance, clairsentience and clairaudience. She is a survivor of severe childhood abuse. Today she uses her extrasensory gifts, as well as her own harrowing life experiences, to inspire millions of people toward authenticity, freedom and joy. Her worldwide success as a modern spiritual leader has earned her the nickname “The Spiritual Catalyst” and she is the bestselling author of three books: *The Sculptor in the Sky*, *Shadows Before the Dawn* and *The Completion Process*.

Also by Teal Swan

The Sculptor in the Sky

*Shadows Before the Dawn:
Finding the Light of Self-Love through Your Darkest Times*

*The Completion Process:
The Practice of Putting Yourself Back Together Again*

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*Promise me now...
Promise me always
That even as they strike you down with myriad hatred and violence,
Even as they dismember and destroy you,
That no man can ever be your enemy.
The only thing worth anything is love;
Unconditional, invincible, limitless love.
One day when you face this world
Unburdened by the tyranny of fear and hate and greed
Your fellow men will behold you.
Across a thousand cycles of living and dying in full bloom,
Your joy will become eternal.
No sun or moon that ever rises
will ever see it fade.*

Promise Me Now by Teal Swan

Introduction

The Three Pillars of Loneliness

We are conceived in connection. We are suckled in the security and warmth of connection from the very moment that our mothers holds us against their breast. We cannot perceive the difference between our mother and ourselves, so it is *then*, in that state of oneness, that we are the closest to who and what we really are. So close that we don't even bother to ask the question, "Who am I?" There's no need to do so because we are not *differentiated*.

In the ecstasy of connection, there is a profound stillness of being. Our movement through life is not motivated by the angst of having to earn something that we are lacking. Instead, *doing* is simply a natural expression of *being*. It's this state of being that is most natural to us. And it's this state of connection that has been *corrupted* in us.

This book explains how that happened, through no fault of our own, and what you can do about it. Your loss of natural connection has caused deep loneliness and desperate pain, but there is a way through it to a renewed feeling of sublime connection, which after all, *is your birthright*.

The loneliness epidemic

We live in a world with billions upon billions of people. And yet the feeling shared by most of the people walking the planet today is that deep down, each one of us is completely alone. Over the course of the years that I have been travelling around the world, teaching different demographics and leading a spiritual movement, it has become painfully apparent that if most people share this feeling of being alone, loneliness is more complex than meets the eye. It is more complex than just being around other people, and it is this deep sense of isolation that needs a remedy. But at the time that I became aware of this epidemic, I didn't have that answer. I didn't have the answer because I felt

epidemic, I didn't have that answer. I didn't have the answer because I felt exactly the same way.

The word loneliness never seems adequate to describe the torment of starvation for closeness. My life had been plagued by loneliness. And fame, which came as a natural accessory to my career, only served to accentuate it like a magnifying glass. I had spent my life never feeling seen, heard, understood or wanted. Fame made finding that closeness that I craved so desperately even harder to attain. To the outside world it seemed that everyone valued and wanted me, but nothing could be further from the truth. People saw me, felt me and understood me less than before. I was surrounded by people but I was nothing more to them than the projections they placed on me. The only value I had, and the only reason they wanted me, was for what they could get through me.

When you're facing a problem without a solution, you are left with one option and that is to look for the answer yourself. I had found myself in the position of being a pioneer in uncharted territory. I saw all too clearly that loneliness was the number-one source of suffering on our planet and also what we are all trying to avoid through a multitude of different coping strategies. But you cannot avoid something and learn about it at the same time. So, I made the decision to do the opposite. The spiritual teachers of the old world were known to go into the desert or into a cave in an attempt to understand something about the universe. I decided to take the same approach. Only instead of disappearing into a cave, I disappeared into loneliness by shamanic journeying in Central America, where I decided I would look the devil in the face. It turned out to be a little more than a year-long process. Seeing loneliness for what it was, and its anatomy, allowed me to understand its opposite. By seeing loneliness clearly, I saw connection clearly. And so, I emerged into the world again ready to teach people about their loneliness and about connection. And it was with this new-found understanding in my heart, mind and body that I wrote this book.

The Anatomy of Loneliness evolved from the disorganized collection of notes I took, often on tear-stained paper. Papers that were stuffed into my backpack for every shamanic journey that I embarked on during that time period of my life. The book practically wrote itself through me. Using this information, I was able to turn loneliness into connection in my own life and in the lives of every other member of my community.

Unconsciousness can be like a virus that spreads from one generation to the next, but so can awakening. It is my vision that the information in this book will spread across the planet until we can officially say that we live in a world with billions of people and none of us feels alone.

The trauma of disconnection

We all have a different story about when we lost this sense of connection. But somewhere over the course of our young lives, we all experienced a fall from grace – from that deep, visceral sense of connection. As a result, most of us proceed to spend the rest of our lives in a never-ending tug of war between the aspect of us that is desperate to *get that connection back* at any cost and the aspect of us that wants to *push connection away* at any cost.

The pain of losing this connection is the deepest form of trauma that we can experience. Trauma fragments us and splits us apart. It turns symmetry into disorganization. Stillness into panic. Harmony into war. Joy into suffering.

When we encounter this trauma, it's as if we put on greycoloured glasses and most of us wear them for the rest of our lives. We see the world through the pain of these lenses. Through them, we perceive ourselves to be separate from the people and things around us. We perceive ourselves to be... *alone*.

The pain of the human condition is that we walk this Earth with multiple billions of other people and yet each of us feels alone. The trauma of our own disconnection causes us to perceive ourselves as disconnected from anything we see as “other”.

It's enough that this disconnection causes *us* pain. But the truth is, it doesn't stop there. This pain bleeds out across the planet. If you are truly connected to something, you cannot cause *it* pain without causing *yourself* pain too. When we perceive ourselves to be disconnected, we no longer feel the ripple of oneness that is our fundamental truth. We no longer feel the impact that everything has on us and that we have on everything else and, as a result, we can cause something or someone else pain without perceiving it in ourselves.

The painful nature of disconnection

The concept that there is something dangerous and painful about being disconnected might seem theoretical and abstract until you realize that this is the reason that, for years, many populations were segregated. People with dark skin were taken from their families and kept as slaves, burnt, beaten and lynched. This is why, in the 1940s, Auschwitz and other death camps were created to exterminate Jews and other demographics that opposed the Nazi regime.

Disconnection caused the US to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. It's why, as of 1979, Pol Pot's regime had eliminated 21 per cent of Cambodia's entire population. And today, disconnection is the reason that someone chooses to train for years for the single task of strapping a bomb to their own body and exploding it, themselves along with it, in an attack aimed to create terror and destruction to whomever they have decided is their enemy.

destruction to whomever they have decided is their enemy.

Every crime that was ever committed happened due to the person perceiving themselves as being both separate and disconnected from the person they committed that crime against. And so it can be said, that the perception of separateness is not only the greatest pain we experience in this life, it's also the single most dangerous thing on the planet.

The deepest form of separation

Why do these desperate situations continue to happen even in our supposedly enlightened world? It's due to a kind of loneliness that isn't solved by simply having more people around. In fact, the most painful kind of loneliness is the loneliness that persists, even in a crowded room. This kind of loneliness, where you can't get a feeling of connection even when you *are* surrounded by people, is akin to the torment of starving to death in a grocery store. It's *this* kind of loneliness that I will address in this book.

There is a saying that goes, "You can only know *black* by knowing *white*." In other words, it's only through contrast that we can develop genuine awareness of any polarity. And so it's by knowing *loneliness* clearly that we will come to know *connection* clearly.

Our progression through this book will flow in perfect alignment with this universal principle of awareness. You will come to know connection by first knowing loneliness. You will begin the process of restoring connection by first seeing loneliness with clear eyes and feeling it with a clear heart. You will come to understand connection by understanding loneliness completely.

The three pillars of loneliness

Connection implies a kind of harmony. It would be easy to assume that loneliness would therefore be completely absent of harmony. And yet, there is an element of harmony in loneliness. That harmony is the number three, which represents harmony. Specifically, I am referring to the kind of harmony that includes and synthesizes two opposites.

The unity symbolized by the number three isn't accomplished by getting rid of number two (the number of opposition) or obliterating the entity that caused the discord. Rather, three merges the chaos of two to create a new entity... an entity that harmoniously includes both opposites. It can be seen therefore as the number of integration.

Bringing together two opposites, in this case one and two, requires the introduction of an entity or common goal, which I refer to as "three", which is

greater than both of them. This equation may seem abstract but as you progress through the book, you will see the divine orchestration inherent in this concept, as well as its implication with regard to connection.

Imagine for a moment that entity number one represents *good* and entity number two represents *evil*. These are two opposites. Entity three would demonstrate what is needed is *a bringing together* of both good and evil toward a common goal that is greater than both of them. That goal can be called *oneness*, the ultimate form of connection.

Interestingly, there are three pillars that make up loneliness. These three pillars, when viewed through the intrinsic power of the number three, would suggest that inherent in the universal fabric of loneliness itself is the answer to the end of loneliness. The solution is within the fabric of loneliness.

THE THREE PILLARS OF LONELINESS ARE:

1. Separation
2. Shame
3. Fear

Once you have a solid understanding of these three crucial elements, and how they relate to your life, the last two sections of this book provide practical ways to help you create connection in your life again, and keep that connection strong and well within all of your relationships.

Part I

The Pillar of Separation

*War we cried
As if it were not of mankind's own making.
The soul of man,
The synagogue of that most violent of battles;
Between good and evil.
Centuries of bloodshed between those rivals.
Each side calls for each other's death.
But there will be no elegy.
There will be no elegy because one cannot die without the other.
Only love will end this war.
And yet it rages on
The very sound of it
Is blasphemy.
Blasphemy against the sanctuary of the human heart.*

Separation by Teal Swan

The Pillar of Separation

The first pillar of loneliness is separation. The story of separation takes us way back before human life even existed. To understand separateness, I must ask you to step way out on the limb of existential truth. Try to conceptualize what we often call God or Source as a unified consciousness. Try to imagine that it is all there is.

It might not be as easy as it sounds to imagine because your brain is designed for the physical world, which is a world of singularity. It's not designed to be able to comprehend oneness. When the brain thinks of *one*, it thinks of a *thing*. But the minute you think of a *thing*, it implies that that thing is separate from something else, even if that something else is just empty space or air. That thing has definition and it has a beginning and an end. But can you stretch your mind enough to imagine a consciousness that has no beginning or end? A consciousness so all-inclusive that there is nothing in existence that is not part of it?

If it helps, try to imagine this consciousness like an infinite ocean that can think and perceive, where all things in existence are simply water droplets making up that ocean. You are a droplet, so is your best friend, so is your worst enemy, so is the coffee table, so is your dog, so is the carrot you just ate, so is the word you are reading on this page and so is the thought you are thinking.

All things in existence may look different, but that's because they are all different expressions of the same energy. They are all droplets making up that ocean and therefore imbued with that same consciousness. There is nothing that is *not* God or Source. This is the true meaning of *oneness*.

To expand your understanding further, imagine a TV screen with static on it. Imagine that the static is just potential energy. You could call it "potential energy" because static is only the *potential* of an image. An image that has not yet appeared but once it begins to appear it is differentiated from the rest of the static. We then see the image as different to the background static and any other images that may appear on the screen. A thought within Source/God consciousness is like this. It is like a part of the static that condenses into a singular shape and form and differentiates it from the static. As it applies to things in the world, a physical thing like you or a coffee table or a tree is in fact just a thought that was thought (differentiated) by Source/God. It is a thought

that has been fed with enough focus that it is now so differentiated it enters the dimension of physicality – the dimension of the most density. Going back to the analogy, physicality is the most “separate” from static that anything *made* of static becomes. And seeing as how you are simply a differentiated aspect of Source/God consciousness, you are imbued with that Source/God consciousness. This means, you are a thought that can think new thoughts. When viewed from this angle, you can see that Source/God does not create more of itself because it is already everything. Instead it divides itself. Each new thought is like a new division within the wholeness of Source consciousness.

Now imagine that Source has the thought: “*What am I?*” You can think of this thought as the birth of the awareness of self-consciousness within Source. This thought is differentiating by its very nature and it’s a direct contradiction to *oneness*. Just that one thought cracked the universal oneness. That was the first time that Source began to feel the torture that there was nothing for it to be in relationship with. The second it created a fracture in itself, it perceived itself as isolated. It’s a loneliness that is so ineffably painful that it comes with no words. A bit like a cell dividing uncontrollably, that thought began fracturing the oneness and those fractures became other fractures. And soon the fractures began forgetting what they were a part of.

This illusion of separateness was a kind of tipping point, after which all further fractures within that oneness no longer perceived the oneness. They only perceived “self” and “other”. This was the birth of *ego*, which is a sense of separate self and this was the birth of *relationship*. It was also the birth of *attachment*. Different aspects of Source became like enemies. They couldn’t see themselves as *one*. They saw themselves as disconnected from one another. And so they began to devour each other and run from each other. They began to push and pull.

This idea of the pain of deep loneliness, not being due to the absence of “other” but by the loss of our wholeness in oneself, has great implications when it comes to us as individuals. We are no different than Source because we are fractals of Source consciousness. The first pillar of loneliness has to do with fragmentation, which can be seen as separation instead of cohesion, within oneself. The fragmentation in the external world is nothing but a mirror of the fragmentation of your internal world.

Fragmentation within each person

Most of us, unless we experience conception or gestation trauma, are born whole. But that wholeness is short lived because we are born relationally dependent into families, which socialized us into a society that is not fully

dependent into families, which socialized us into a society that is not fully evolved yet. And that spells trouble. Basically, we learn that some aspects of ourselves are acceptable and others are not.

What is acceptable versus unacceptable depends on the perspective of the family you're born into. The aspects of us that are seen as unacceptable (both positive and negative) are rejected, or we could say pushed away, by our family. And the aspects that are seen as acceptable are not pushed away, they are in fact included. Essentially, we are only shown love in response to things that people around us want to include as part of themselves and their lives.

Therefore, in the name of survival, each of us as children tries to gain control over our environment and preserve ourselves by doing anything we can to disown, deny and suppress those aspects in ourselves that meet with *disapproval* while exaggerating those that meet with *approval*.

What we're really doing is dissociating from what we know is disapproved of, and this creates a split within us, which we call the conscious and the subconscious. Now we have the birth of the "personality". It's ironic because this self-preservation instinct is in fact our first act of self-rejection or fragmentation. It's a mirror of the process that took place originally within Source consciousness when it thought to define itself and ended up creating disunity rather than oneness.

We think of someone as having one personality, often times with contradictory traits. But the truth is that your personality is made up of several personalities. The most dominant ones are the ones that protect you from hurt, especially rejection, in the specific environment that you grew up in.

These personalities are comparable to conjoined twins and they reside within us without us even knowing they are there. I call these inner personalities our "Inner Twins". The degree of trauma you experienced during this process usually determines how severe the fragmentation is within you. If you are experiencing deep and chronic loneliness, you are on the more severe end of the scale.

We may have any number of these Inner Twins inside us and they all have a purpose, and it is a concept that I will come back to many times throughout this book. It is a critical concept to grasp and it will change your world once you understand all its dynamics.

How your Inner Twin personalities developed

Imagine that a child is born into a family where anger is not an OK emotion to express. When the child gets angry, they are shamed so the child learns to suppress and deny it for the sake of survival within the household. But the anger

doesn't go away. The child just consciously denies it. It becomes subconscious.

As an adult, this person is unlikely to have any awareness that they have anger in them at all. They will not and cannot see themselves clearly because they have denied that aspect of themselves. So if another person tells this individual, "You're really an angry person," the individual won't relate to that at all. They will probably only relate to themselves as easy-going.

But when we deny, suppress or disown something, *it doesn't disappear*. It just fades from our conscious awareness. If we are asked to acknowledge it, it will bring up the same fear of the initial rejection and can make us feel like we are going to die. This is why self-awareness isn't so easy to attain.

Every human that was ever socialized, which is almost everyone, went through this same process of denial which caused them to split themselves into parts – some parts that are owned and some parts that are disowned. This kind of self-rejection is the birth of self-hate and the deep loneliness that we feel is the result of those missing rejected or disowned parts of our self.

The soul wants one thing and that is to make us whole again. We will be provided with every single opportunity to become whole again as we proceed through life. But in order to become whole again, we need to see and accept the aspects of ourselves that we disowned, denied and rejected. This is painful.

The main split within us is the subconscious and conscious. But within the larger subconscious and conscious, there are multiple fragments. For every part of a person's personality that is exaggerated, there is a matching part within the subconscious that is the polar opposite. For example, in my childhood, if my *vulnerability* was seen as an unacceptable weakness and I faced rejection or some other painful punishment because of it, I would fragment myself so that this *vulnerable aspect* of me was buried deep away from my own awareness. Instead I would identify outwardly with being tough and strong. That would be the personality that I show to the world.

Still, the original *vulnerable* part of me didn't go away, it just got buried and because it is buried, I cannot meet the needs of this *vulnerable* self. As a result, its energy often gets expressed in covert and manipulative ways. In essence, a fight ensues between the two personalities over which one gets to "take over" my body. I may even get sick from this internal fight, which might physically force me into a state of *vulnerability* to the dismay of my external tough, strong self. Please note that not only are these two personality traits on completely different pages but they also inhabit quite different parallel perceptual realities.

We usually only recognize people as having multiple personalities when they are diagnosed with an actual disorder by a psychologist. But the reality is that we all have multiple inner personalities; any number of "Inner Twins".

Keep in mind that these personalities won't usually present themselves as different personalities. Instead they will be more like "states of being" that take over depending on the circumstance that you encounter in the external world. For example, one of these personalities could simply be experienced as *suddenly wanting to end a relationship and escape off by yourself* when just earlier that same day, you were loving the other person's embrace and planning your future together.

Be aware that your disowned or denied aspects will be completely *invisible* to you, but completely *obvious* to other people. Of course, if we have a strong aversion to something, we won't initially recognize it in ourselves. And here is another telling fact: the more we hate something in someone else, the more we rejected it within our self long ago. And the opposite is true: the more we *love something* in someone else, the more we *sorrowfully disowned* it in our self. Thus, all these extreme negative and extreme positive reactions to other people are actually perfect opportunities to develop self-awareness.

REVERSING THE PROCESS OF FRAGMENTATION

In order to reverse the process of fragmentation, we need to start making room for all the aspects of ourselves to be welcomed into the light of consciousness. To enhance this process, try the following steps:

1. Look at the negative traits that you hate in others, especially in your partner. What bothers you in others?
2. Discover the positive intention behind *the thing you hate*. What is that trait trying to keep you safe from? What is its positive intention for being present in your life? The answer, of course, is always going to be in line with trying to keep you from getting hurt.
3. Ask yourself, why was it dangerous to be the opposite of that negative trait? For example, if you're lazy, ask yourself why was it so dangerous (or not OK) to be driven and motivated while you were growing up?
4. Recognize that no matter how much you want to deny it, the traits you hate in other people are a direct mirror of what you've rejected in yourself. The more you try to protect yourself from yourself, the more the aspects you hate in others will look nothing like you. Don't be

surprised if you tell yourself, “I’m not that way at all.” It’s natural.

5. Be willing to choose to be vulnerable and open your mind to gain full awareness of how you are *similar* to the traits you dislike so much in other people – especially your partner, children and parents. There are two possibilities here. Either you are very much like those things you hate in others, or it’s so buried and rejected in you that you *never* do that same thing, even to the degree that you have an unhealthy aversion for it.
6. If you are struggling with this, involve other people in the process. This is a humbling step to take. A good way to tell if you have suppressed something is if it has been reported to you by more than one person. So think back on common complaints people have had about you. Another way is to have the people that are the closest to you write down your negative traits and take special notice of the things that more than one person mentioned. Pay especially close attention to the things people say about you that bother you.
7. Turn the tables now and ask yourself about the negative trait itself (rather than the more positive one you focused on in step 3). In other words, why was it dangerous or not OK to exhibit those negative traits in your life? For example, why was it not OK to be lazy?
8. Begin to find approval for the traits that you dislike in others and in yourself but do this without lying to yourself. You can’t say you like something you don’t like. But there may be things about that negative trait that are positive that you do like. For example, a person who is cruel may have no problem caring what other people think of them.
9. Adopt the aspects of others that you hate that are suppressed aspects of yourself in a way that benefits you. This doesn’t mean become lazy or become cruel. What it means is, take time off, or quit saying yes to everyone. Think about it: what is the positive aspect of someone who is lazy? They are not afraid to rest or take time off for themselves. So adopting that disowned aspect of yourself could take the form of you taking a rest. This will bring you closer to a state of wholeness and integration with your Inner Twins and keep them from battling so much within you.

Commit to self-awareness

We will always judge things we rejected in ourselves long ago but judgement

we will always judge things we rejected in ourselves long ago but judgement doesn't have to be such a bad thing. You can't stop yourself from doing something by simply telling yourself to stop. What you can do is to use both your positive and negative judgements, most especially those of your partner and those people closest to you, to discover and integrate what you've rejected in yourself. This causes our judgements to turn into observations.

When we acknowledge and see these denied selves, which became our hurt and hidden Inner Twins, we have the opportunity to meet their needs. As yourself, what can you offer this aspect in order to bring it closer to the whole? This is loving it. This is the approach we need to take with ourselves and with each other.

For the sake of your own understanding, think of your skin as being like a container. Imagine that inside that container are smaller containers. Some people have more of these containers inside them than others. Each container holds a person inside it with its own personality, beliefs, fears, traumas, preferences, wants and needs. Each one has its own ego. So you can see that we are not a singularity. You, like all people, are a multitude. Each little container person is a *part* within us. These parts are in various stages of growth and development.

When our consciousness splits as the result of trauma, our ego splits in two – and it can do this over and over again. Our sense of self becomes fragmented. So even though we have one body, within that body we end up with multiple selves, any number of these Inner Twins. We allow certain ones out of their containers so they can act through our body and interact with people in our world. Every time these parts come out of their containers and “take over” our body, we can mistake their perceptions, beliefs, fears, traumas, wants and needs for *all* of who we are. But, of course, this hidden Inner Twin is only one small part of ourselves and an unhappy, unfulfilled part at that. So becoming aware that this is happening, when it is happening, will be a huge gamechanger for you.

How your Inner Twins operate inside you

Given our discussion thus far, you know that the universe functions like a mirror. It stands to reason then, if you are experiencing debilitating loneliness in your life, it means this is exactly what is occurring in your internal world between your Inner Twins. They are not connected to each other and they are not in harmony either, and the reason is that some of your Inner Twins are experiencing *entirely different realities*.

To help you understand this better, let me give you an example. A woman that I worked with once discovered that one of her Inner Twins was in charge of protecting her and appeared in her mind's eye like a knight. This knight was

keeping a second Inner Twin, which appeared in her mind's eye as a fair maiden, hidden and locked in a dungeon. The knight Inner Twin was convinced that the maiden Inner Twin was safe from harm in there and feeling good. This was the knight's reality.

To help her integrate these two Inner Twin personalities, we had the knight aspect actually turn around to face the maiden instead of facing away, and when he did this, the knight realized that the maiden was not OK. *Far from it*. When he looked at her, the maiden Inner Twin was dying, sprawled out on the floor, emotionally starved.

Not only that, in the back of the dungeon where this maiden was kept, there was a giant opening, where other Inner Twins – including an *internal evaluator* personality – were welcome to come in and beat the maiden until she was bloody and gasping for breath. This had been the “reality” that the maiden Inner Twin had been experiencing for years, when the whole time, the knight Inner Twin was convinced that everything was fine and she was safe and well taken care of.

The woman I was working in this case originally came to consult with me because she was desperately lonely. Once we explored her inner world, it became essential that we find a way to get these two Inner Twins into the same reality. Our prerogative was to find a way that they could see each other's viewpoints so as to get on the same page with one another, and this is what you need to do as well if you are suffering from deep loneliness.

One good way to get them into the same reality, aside from having them become aware of one another, is to create a place in your mind where they can all come together. Using this same scenario of the knight and the maiden, once the knight Inner Twin was able to admit that his reality had been drastically different than hers, the knight personality was able to *accommodate* the maiden's feelings, needs, thoughts and her personal truth. They decided together to go to a Hobbit Land, where the knight could keep watch while the maiden recovered in a cosy hobbit house. They agreed that she would also have the support of three other Inner Twins who the maiden and the knight agreed they could trust the most.

Whenever you have a split within you, the likelihood is that those two inner aspects of yourself are not experiencing or perceiving the same reality. Once you guide them to accommodate each other's realities, they will arrive at a third reality, which they can both agree to and inhabit. Finally, both Inner Twins can be seen, heard, understood, felt, and most of all... they will have someone *with* them, on the same page and in the same reality.

When you align all the Inner Twins within you, and they are no longer lonely in their separate realities, then you will no longer be a match to loneliness in

your life either. One of the main reasons you felt lonely in the first place was due to the fragments within you, your Inner Twins, became deeply separated and felt alone and isolated from one another, and isolated from the awareness that belonged to your essence. The more that you connect with and integrate internally, the readier you will be to connect authentically with friends and loved ones in an intimate and sustainable way.

This whole example might seem to some of you like it's just an abstract idea, but with awareness over time you will begin to recognize these personalities within you and see that they are at war with each other within yourself. Meditation, quiet times, journaling and other techniques can help you get in much closer touch with your inner selves. And of course, you can always take advantage of the fact that any time you hate or love a personality trait in someone else, it is an indication to you that you have that trait hidden in an Inner Twin, who is in need of recognition, healing and integration.

Understanding what you are identified with

Identity is the condition of being oneself, one separate self. Another word for this is ego. You cannot have a sense of self without simultaneously having a sense of other. Whenever we associate something with our self, we identify with it. It becomes part of us. We make it the same as us. This is what attachment really is – identification.

A great many spiritual teachers emphasize the importance of *dis*-identifying from things outside you, most especially other people. But it's my opinion that it's not identification with external things that cause us the most suffering, instead it is identification with things that we perceive to be *internal to us*.

In particular, we are most identified with the three primary aspects of ourselves: our body, our mind and our emotions. Each of these three aspects is inherently a different expression of Source consciousness. We often mistake these expressions to be *the totality* of who we are, sort of like an artist who has become so identified with his painting that he has forgotten who he ultimately is, and that he is *more* than his painting.

In our case as humans, we think we *are* our emotions, we *are* our body and we *are* our thoughts. And as such, we are so attached to these things that they cause us to suffer. And for those of us who have painful emotions, painful thoughts or a painful body, we suffer to the degree that life is a torment.

But at the risk of rejecting yourself in the process, I suggest that you dis-identify from things in a way that lets them fall away like rose petals. This will happen as a result of exposing them to your conscious awareness. If instead you try to force or push them away in an aggressive manner, you will only serve to

try to force or push them away in an aggressive manner, you will only serve to further cement them in yourself and you'll feel bad and rejected in the process. That could essentially cause an intense survival reaction within yourself in response to your own self-rejection.

IDENTIFYING YOUR ASPECTS

The best way is to *recognize* these aspects first and foremost. Start by taking out a sheet of paper and jotting down all the things you suspect you might be identified with.

For example, the minute you say *my* friends, using the word “my” to describe them, you are identified with your friends, and thus attached to them. If you can make any statement that starts with, “I am [something]” you are identifying with that too. Such as, the minute you say, “I am sexy,” you are identified with *being sexy*.

Try to identify these thoughts and beliefs that you are identified with. For example, “Money doesn’t grow on trees,” might be a thought you are identified with. Try to recognize emotions you are identified with, which are likely to be the ones that are chronic or come up most often. For example, disappointment might be one of them. Then try to recognize the aspects of your body that you are identified with. For example, if you see yourself as fat, you are physically identified with being fat.

Anything you *identify with* will cause a strong reaction. Your ego has owned it as part of the composite that makes up what you are. Whenever those things are threatened, your ego will go into a state of reactivity and defence. The ego has motive to maintain these aspects of your life, even if they cause you pain, because it sees the loss of these things as annihilation. We can even become so deeply identified with pain that the ego has a motive to keep us *in* pain.

All this being said, the real practice is to recognize the things you are identified with as they arise, and this is easiest to do with emotions. You can use strong emotions as an alarm bell, awakening you to the fact that you are identified with something and thus need to recognize it. It’s a call to become intensely present with your full attention on what is really occurring within you. By recognizing it, you are observing it, meaning you are in the perspective of the observer self being present with your temporal self rather than being lost in the perspective of

the temporal self.

When a strong emotion arises, face it within yourself instead of reacting to it or reacting in order to try to get away from it. When you feel it, use the feeling as a reminder that this is the emotional body becoming activated or charged like an electric fence. Remember, it's not the emotion itself that is causing the suffering, it's the fact that you identify with it.

This awareness of calling it what it is and feeling it, is all that it takes to dis-identify with something. Don't try to stop caring about how you feel and don't try to change how you feel. Just recognize it and let it be there. You will often experience insight coming as a result of observing the emotion. You may discover what triggered it, what meaning you assigned to the trigger and also insight about the situation that causes it to dissipate on its own.

When it comes to thoughts, the process works the same way. By recognizing a thought and observing it and letting it be there, you don't add fuel to it. It stops attracting other likeminded thoughts and so you are able to stop the thought's momentum. How powerful will it be to be able to stop a negative spiral of thoughts?

When it comes to the body, if you think you are your body, and your body changes, you lose your identity. So practise observing your body as if it's *an experience* you are currently having rather than *who you are*. When you recognize your body, see it, feel it and consciously experience it, you are in that moment *not* your body. You are dis-identified with it.

In this same way, you are not the ego and you are not the separate self. The minute you dis-identify with these concepts by becoming aware of the ego or the separate self, you are in that moment, *not those things*. At that point, you are acutely aware of who and what you are not and so the greatest obstacle is dissolved between you and your true self and you can enjoy united consciousness once again.

Selective identification

Dis-identification serves immensely but must not be used as a tool for selective identification. For thousands of years, humanity's standard practice has been to dis-identify from the parts that are unacceptable and identify with the parts that are acceptable. A traditional guru is someone that has decided to identify with only one part and allows *only* that ego to exist by feeding it. Only that Inner Twin gets to come out of its container.

For example, imagine a guru that decides their most acceptable part (their concept of enlightened) is a person who is never angry, who instantly forgives,

who has no worldly needs and is always in a state of pure positive focus. Any time anger rises within them or a worldly need or a negative thought, they will deny, reject, suppress and disown the part that is feeling that anger or need or negative thought. They will jump into the persona of the guru that they have created and will deny those things and lie to themselves and others that the way they feel is entirely how they feel. They won't honour the truth or reality of any other part. They will do this until they literally lose awareness of having any other part. They will mistake the guru part for all of who they are to the exclusion of all other parts. This is their discipline. This is the discipline of self-abandonment because like it or not these parts they deny are also *them*. Their Ego is their "concept of an enlightened being" and they cannot admit to anything else within them. All has to be explained under that identity. It is the strongest attachment you can imagine. This is not integration. This is selective identification.

The rest of the egos within don't go away, in fact they are so suppressed they eventually become so fuelled by the energy of suppression that they are able to operate completely out of awareness and conscious control. It is at this point that a guru usually develops a kind of double life that is entirely justified by the conscious personality. For example, a guru may preach about ethics while engaging in paedophilia. But their identification with their "guru" personality, to the exclusion of all other personalities, makes it so that he justifies it by saying that they are blessing the children by having sex with them in some way.

Your authentic self is not any one of these parts. It is ALL of them and so it is also NONE of them at once. Authenticity is the enabling of the spectrum of internal selves to come together as a unity around an essence. This is integration. So why don't we do this already? Because it is infinitely harder to integrate a persona that is in pain than it is to banish that persona into a container. It is much harder to integrate a persona that is in pain than it is to selectively dis-identify into a persona that feels no pain. It is really difficult to practise integration in a world that believes that goodness and rightness and healing and virtue is achieved by selective identification. But we are lonely and isolated and so the age of selective identification must come to an end. The age of integration, which is genuine authenticity, has come.

What is love?

The one thing that most of us want to identify with and draw to us is love. But what is it? We often mistake love for the feeling of approval. Approval is a close brother to love because when we approve of something, we pull it toward us and accept it as part of ourselves. By approving of something, we are, in essence, not

accept it as part of ourselves. By approving or something, we are, in essence, not rejecting it.

But at the most fundamental level, to love something is to take it as part of yourself. It's an experience more than it could ever be a concept. Love is inclusive. It's the energetic movement toward oneness. When you love something, you energetically pull it toward you and include it as you.

The exact opposite vibration of love is *fear*. To fear is to separate something from you. Fear is exclusive. It's the energetic movement toward individualization. When you fear something, you push it away and dis-include it from you and we will explore fear in Part III. For now, let's get back to love, which is what allows you to access one of the most fundamental realities in this universe which is oneness. We may perceive there are separate things in the world, but of course this perception is an illusion. We are all comprised of the same energy that is merely expressing itself as different things.

You'll recall that we have been referring to different parts of ourselves as fragments or *Inner Twins*. Occasionally one of these fragments recognizes itself positively in another fragment and in that moment, it takes it to be the same as itself. This is love. And remember, separation is an illusion. What we might think of as being an illusion is still part of united consciousness (what we call God or Source) because there is nothing that *is not part* of God or Source. For this reason, we could call *fear* an illusion within Source consciousness whose *truth* is love.

Think again about the opposite of love and you will see how detrimental it is. When we think "I hate" or "I don't want" or "I don't like" or make negative judgements, this is the energy of *pushing things away*. It pushes us away from oneness and into a state of loneliness. That is the opposite of love and it causes pain.

There is only one type of pain in this universe and it is separation. There is only one kind of happiness in this universe and it is unity. Any time you feel pain of any kind, it means that you feel separate from something and any time you feel happiness of any kind, it means that you feel united with something.

In order to live fully, the new question toward the things you fear and hate needs to be, "How can I love this thing?" Ultimately, the answer is, "How can I not?" Even if you currently hate it, it's part of you whether you like it or not, and because you are indivisible from Source or God, it is also indivisible. It's part of oneness and love is to take it as yourself. Even if you push it away, it's still part of this universe, which is one. So it's still part of you.

Choosing love as our core mission in life

This is the way it fits together. The positive aspect of Source needs to practise giving love to the negative aspects instead of pushing them away. The negative side needs to accept this love as a bringing in of itself. For thousands of years, duality within the universe has been like a war between good and evil with both sides steadfastly unwilling to see itself in the other.

But the universal teachers saw this all quite differently. When embodiments of the divine, such as the Buddha and Christ, came to humanity, they did not teach about good and evil. Instead what they taught was love. And they did not teach to love *selectively*. Jesus, famous for lovingly caretaking the lepers in society, taught his followers to love *all* things. He taught to love what you currently push away from yourself. He taught to love unconditionally. He did not say that there were any exceptions, because there are no exceptions.

The Buddha recognized his adversary Mara as himself. He saw Mara as being equally responsible for his own enlightenment. And he did not teach to cast Mara out or defeat him so as to separate from him. Instead he taught his disciples to metaphorically invite their own Mara in for tea. You will find this same truth about love in all the major religious and spiritual leaders at their core.

The universe wants us to actualize that oneness once more. It's calling us home. It has been calling us home for centuries upon centuries upon centuries. It creates embodiments of itself, like Buddha, Christ and other enlightened leaders, to call us back home. And listeners distort that call. They warp it to fit in with their own culturally ingrained resistance.

Again, it comes down to the fact that the universe is a mirror of us. We are a microcosm in the bigger macrocosm. We are a fractal of God. For the universe to become one, we must become one. We will do that by integrating, which means we must love the aspects of us that we don't currently love. We need to pull close and see ourselves in the aspects of us that we want to push away. The time has come for unconditional love.

In the Introduction, you will recall that I explained how loneliness is associated with the number three. The number three merges two opposites to create a new entity, one that harmoniously *includes* both opposites. Thus, three can be seen as the number of integration. If good and evil are the opposites, oneness is the entity that includes both opposites. Integration is the process whereby this third entity will be actualized. It's up to each of us to strive for this and in doing so we will naturally open ourselves up to connection and overcome loneliness that has plagued us for far too long.

Part II

The Pillar of Shame

*Without all ornament, and with substance still,
To love one's self, despite life's tainted course is no kind of false art form.
Is worth so faint a thing to perceive?
The seasons of life that cover it in complex cobwebs
would have you forget that potential... is worth.
And all that dies around it
leaves it green.*

Worth by Teal Swan

The Pillar of Shame

The second pillar of loneliness is shame, which is one of the most misunderstood aspects of social behaviour. The reason for this is that most people think that shame is solely a mental and emotional response to self-diminishing experiences, beliefs and thoughts. The truth is shame is much more primal and debilitating because it is the mechanism of fragmentation.

To understand shame, imagine a sea anemone. If you poke a sea anemone with your finger, it immediately reacts by pinching itself closed. This *reaction* happens at an organic, instinctual level. In other words, without the sea anemone having to think about making it happen.

This visceral reaction is comparable to our fight-or-flight mechanism. You don't have to think about jumping out of the way of an oncoming car. When your body perceives a threat, it reacts and you feel that reaction. Shame is actually a primitive reaction encoded in your organism, just like your fight-or-flight mechanism. And interestingly, *so is love*.

One of the main concepts of this book is that there are only two basic energetic movements within this universe: to push something away and to bring something closer. When we see certain things, such as something we perceive as cute, it triggers an instinctive reaction to bring it closer. But when we see threatening things, this triggers an instinctive reaction to push them away.

Love is an instinctual reaction to pull something closer to you. Fear is an instinctual reaction to push something away from you. And shame is an instinctual reaction to push *yourself* away from *yourself*. Of course, you cannot actually do this because your consciousness experiences a singular embodiment. The only way to push *yourself* away from *yourself* is through fragmentation. For this reason, we could say that *shame is the mechanism for fragmentation* as well as suppression. And shame creates *internal separation*.

What does shame feel like?

This shame reaction comes with a certain “feeling signature”, meaning that you feel this reaction in your body as specific sensations, in the same way that we feel love. The most common feeling associated with shame is that your chest or heart area will ache intolerably. Your neck, chest and cheeks might also flush or you might have the feeling of diminishing in size, along with the feeling of

wanting to hide or contract.

When we are babies, we function in the world more like sea anemones. We primarily operate with the world through *felt perception*. We are reactive beings and, at this stage of life, the world is – for lack of a better word – “imprinting” us. It’s imprinting us with the feeling signature of experiences and with instinctive reactions to those felt experiences.

As babies, we learn at a primal level long before we become cognitive beings. Every affective feeling or emotion we experience is unique, like a signature. The way it feels to be kissed by someone you have a crush on feels a very specific way in your body physically and emotionally. And it feels differently to be kissed by someone you have a crush on than it does to be hugged by a friend when they say goodbye. These individual feelings, though we may give them names, are ultimately something we feel. We know and remember them by how they uniquely feel inside our body. These are *feeling signatures*.

Try this now and see what happens. Close your eyes and imagine eating a lemon in as much detail as possible. What just happened to your body? You probably felt that reaction to sourness in the back of your jaw, like a sharp cramp. You probably started salivating a bit. Your body reacts, as if you are really eating the lemon. But open your eyes. You aren’t eating a lemon. You experienced the *feeling signature* of eating a lemon.

When we are young, we experience these feeling signatures in the context of the connection we receive from people, or the lack thereof. Even before we are old enough to conceptualize of ourselves in terms of having a separate identity, we still have individual reactions to other people and things in the world. For example, if a very young baby is held un-swaddled and face up with its arms loose, you will see the baby react as if it’s falling. This is called the Moro Reflex. The bottom line is that we react instinctively to how we are treated by others.

Unlike many other species on Earth, our survival was and is quite literally dependent on other people. The single biggest threat to our survival is not starvation, thirst or exposure but isolation. Isolation in our species leads to all those other things that could kill us. You could say that the single biggest threat, and therefore fear, for a human being is the fear of a lack of connection with others.

Lack of connection can take many forms. For example, it can take the form of withdrawal, abuse, ignoring, abandonment, lack of support or disapproval, just to name a few. And as such, shame can be seen as the organic, instinctive affective reaction to the experience of being emotionally, mentally or physically

pushed away. Essentially, it happens when we experience the traumatic stimulus of losing someone's love. Not only are we embedded therefore with this intrinsic sense of shame; we are also imbedded with a deep sense of loss and often no cognitive understanding about why we feel this shame or why we feel this sense of loss.

The roots of shame

The origins of shame began at an age when we were not *thinking* about our self. We were too young for that. Instead, we were instinctively reacting to ourselves from how others reacted to us. We can become imprinted with this instinctual reaction toward ourselves as tiny babies and even in utero. Often the circumstances of our conception even contribute to it. The problem is that the feeling signature of this reaction (that was in fact the internalization of the reaction we were eliciting in others) becomes instinctively imprinted in us and doesn't mature. It becomes the foundation upon which other emotions and thoughts that corroborate with that feeling signature about ourselves and reaction to ourselves are built.

When our earliest caregivers did things like look at us with disgust, ignore us, abuse us, shame us, criticize us, fail to meet our needs or fail to bond with us, we learned that the world is unsafe and we should distrust it. But perhaps, most importantly, we learnt about ourselves through the way others reacted to us. For example, if we need someone and we perceive that we are causing them to withdraw from us because they see us (or something about us) as undesirable, we will immediately learn that *we are undesirable*. This perception, which happens at an instinctual and somatic level, causes us to push ourselves away energetically and emotionally. Essentially, if I am undesirable, I must push myself away.

Of course the only way we can push ourselves away from ourselves is to fragment internally, while still carrying this feltbased experience of being essentially bad, broken, defective, wrong and undesirable at our core. The emotions we feel at that moment become embedded as the feeling signature that is the foundation of our self-concept.

Think of it like this. You would have no idea of what you looked like physically without your bathroom mirror because you come to know yourself through reflection. People in our external world are like a giant mirror to us. When someone says, "Why are you so angry all the time?" you come to consider yourself to be an angry person. If people look at you like something is wrong with you, you come to consider yourself as defective. If someone tells you that you are beautiful, you come to see yourself as beautiful.

you are beautiful, you come to see yourself as beautiful.

We see the way people react to us as a reflection of who we really are and when we are children, we don't question the reflection we are being shown through other people. We don't question the accuracy of the mirror. Instead, we "swallow the mirror". Our internal concept merely becomes the same as what is being reflected from the outside. Let's imagine that a child has a mother who actually does not want a child because she wants to live a life around what she wants to do and have no obligations. The mirror (which is the mother) won't be an accurate reflection of the worth of the child because it will be tainted with, "I don't want you".

The reflection the child will see in the mirror is that they are an unwanted burden and unimportant. Instead of questioning the mirror, they will swallow the view of the mirror. In order to ensure their survival, the child will then adapt their behaviour according to that self-image – most likely seeing themselves as intrinsically worthless.

In this way, the origins of shame begin at an age when we were not *thinking* about our self. We were too young for that. Instead, we were instinctively reacting to ourselves, based on how others reacted to us. We can become imprinted with this instinctual reaction toward ourselves as tiny babies and even in utero. Often the circumstances of our conception can even contribute to it.

Emotions that we either call shame or associate with shame – such as discouragement, invisibility, mortification, shyness, embarrassment or self-consciousness – are *secondary* to shame as a reaction. From the time we are toddlers, we begin to mentally build our cognitive self-concept around that much more primal, organic biological and learned affective reaction of shame. We begin to think thoughts like, "something is really wrong with me" and we then feel the emotion of selfdisgust or hatred. Later as adolescents or adults, this often converts into behaviours such as alcoholism, codependency, cutting or episodes of rage. The reason that shame is so hard to undo is that it's encoded in our primal learning centres in the same way as other instinctual reactions, such as the fight-or-flight mechanism.

Shame comes across as a fundamental and often abstract deep negative feeling toward yourself – a stain that permeates your core. And nothing you do to remedy the way you feel about yourself seems to scratch the surface, much less touch deeply enough to reach that level of your core, where that stain is imprinted.

A sophisticated understanding of shame-based loneliness

Earlier in the book, when we explored the first pillar of loneliness, I explained

the childhood conditions that create separation. Those same conditions create the standards that lead us deep into shame. When we are young, we come into an un-awakened society, where there are collective social and cultural values. And when we value one thing, we usually condemn the opposite.

For example, self-sacrifice may be a social value and selfishness is condemned. We deem one good and the other bad. In order to keep the social order, we socialize children by training them to behave in a way that is acceptable to the society in which we live. We indoctrinate children with our social and cultural values and reward them when they adhere to them. We punish children when they demonstrate behaviour that contradicts our social and cultural values.

So as a child, if we want our needs to be met, to survive in society and have a chance at feeling things like love, belonging, contribution and safety, we only have one option: to adopt the values of the society into which we're born.

Let's say that when you were younger, you ran into the living room naked. And let's say you were raised in a society that valued modesty and condemned public nudity. The adults in your environment would immediately react by discouraging the behaviour. They might get angry or send you back to your room or dole out a consequence. The disapproval would be painful enough that you would feel embarrassment and humiliation. This would be a painful enough experience that you would want to avoid it in the future at all costs. In response, what you would do in order to avoid it in the future is that you would adopt the social value of modesty and you would *make it your own standard*.

Those that struggle with shame on a chronic basis were disciplined by adults that either, intentionally or unintentionally, made a direct correlation between *doing* bad and *being* bad. For example, a child who steals a cookie from the counter top might be told, "Bad girl" or "I told you no, what the hell is wrong with you?" The child has no way to differentiate between their parent's negative action and themselves being bad.

Just to clarify here: shame is about *being* bad and guilt is about *doing* bad. This is painful enough when shame comes on occasion in direct response to something you have done that makes you feel like a bad person. But there are cases when shame becomes a permanent state of being. If you struggle with deep loneliness, the kind that isn't solved by having other people in the room, shame is your permanent state of being. If the feeling is sustained over time, we feel inadequate, inferior, unworthy and not good enough all the time, and shame become the root of low self-esteem because we will never live up to the standards set for us.

For example, let's say that you are born into a Christian family that views

homosexuality as an abomination, but you are gay. For the sake of survival, you adopt the values put forth by the Bible and so your standard will be, “I must be straight.” But internally you know you are not straight and you are going to permanently fall short of your own standard. You will feel shame all the time as a permanent state of being.

Shame and “shoulds”

Shame is about falling short of a standard but we can’t talk about standards without talking about “shoulds”. Imagine that you are driving when you see a man running into the middle of the road as fast as he can to retrieve a ladder that has fallen out of the back of a truck. Think about the different reactions that this situation could elicit. One driver could be absolutely furious because the man caused him to swerve to avoid hitting him. One driver could thank God for his bravery because by risking his own life to run out on the road, he could potentially be saving the lives of anyone that might be unable to avoid hitting the ladder.

If this man has a wife and children, they may feel betrayed because their husband and father would choose to risk his life without a thought to the pain that would cause them. A police officer may see this man as stupid and be upset that he didn’t call the authorities to remove the ladder. A news anchor may want to feature him on the nightly news as a hero. All of these reactions are entirely different because they have different needs, different past experiences and very different *values*.

Values are determined by needs. If I need to get to work on time, I’m going to value an efficient route and be angry at anyone who gets in my way. If I need to stay safe, I will value anyone who makes sure the road is a safe place to drive. If I need my husband, I will value any act that keeps him with me and devalue any act that could take him away. If I need to feel like I am in control of public safety, I’m going to value a person who follows the rules and get angry at anyone who risks their own life. If I’m a news anchor who needs a good story, I’m going to value a story about a public hero.

Most beliefs, rules and values are formed in response to needs. These become the foundation of your standards, which translate to “shoulds”, and the basis by which you decide you should or shouldn’t think something, feel something, say something or do something.

Examine your beliefs, rules and values through the lens of, “Every one of them is created in response to a need of parents, culture or society at some point in time”. You adopted their values, beliefs and rules so as to be accepted and

loved by them. The things they taught you became your “shoulds” and you didn’t even question most of them. But beliefs, values and rules change when *needs* change.

One critical thing to understand about shame is that we cannot fight shame without creating *more* of it. When we feel shame, we often become incredibly defensive. It can feel like people are walking on broken glass or thin ice around us. We blame others, often aggressively. Blame diverts attention from our own insecurities and flaws. It makes someone else *wrong* so that we can feel *right*. And when we struggle with shame, we become consumed by contempt for others.

Narcissism revisited

People who feel shame often become highly narcissistic (completely self-focused) without even realizing it. Of course realizing it would only lead to more shame. But don’t confuse narcissism with self-love because it’s anything *but*. The person who is narcissistic becomes obsessively preoccupied with their own self-interests, needs and wants because they are starving to death inside. They go on a quest externally to find approval, superiority, admiration and significance, but the quest for attention is merely an attempt to fill the void of feeling worthless.

In today’s terms, narcissism means to derive gratification from vanity or egotistical admiration of your own attributes. It’s seen as a form of self-defeating pride. But this view of narcissism is *completely inaccurate*. There is nothing innately wrong with Narcissus, a character from Greek mythology. Adoring one’s own reflection and deriving gratification from admiring oneself is in fact healthy. It’s much healthier than being critical of oneself or striving to be selfless.

But our culture, which has been heavily influenced for thousands of years by organized religion, recognizes self-love as vanity and ultimately as pride, which is considered by many to be a sin. And so, sadly, Narcissus has become the poster child not only for vanity and pride but also self-love. As a result, we confuse self-love with selfishness, when they are drastically different.

The most important thing when it comes to understanding narcissism is to first separate self-love from selfishness in your mind. Most people think that narcissism is an extreme form of self-love but it’s not. A state of narcissism has nothing to do with self-love. It has to do with someone who perceives an extreme lack of self-sustaining resources, like love. And if we feel deep, visceral loneliness, we lack love in our lives.

Self-love is deep devotion or affection for yourself, while selfishness, on the other hand, is concern only for your own welfare, benefit and interests, regardless of the impact on others. Selfishness is not a natural state and only occurs when we focus on and become convinced of the *lack* in our life.

But let's look for a moment at the most common ways that a narcissist comes to be. It happens in dysfunctional homes. The most common way is that as a child, a person was unable to conform to the fantasy that one parent or another held for the child's personality or behaviour. The child could not figure out how to please the adult. As a result, the child was treated as if they were wilful and difficult. They were "the problem child". The parent personalized the child's behaviour, developed resistance to the child and punished the child for it in covert or overt ways. It's very likely that this child was called selfish and ungrateful growing up and the primary caregiver resented the child on a deep level. The adult saw the child as a *threat* on a subconscious level.

The other most common condition that causes a narcissistic state of being is also the by-product of a dysfunctional home. This type of person is often referred to as a codependent. As a child, this person was able to conform to the fantasy that one parent or another held for the child's personality or behaviour. The child did figure out how to please the adult. But he or she had to give up themselves to do it and to act in ways that pleased the adult so they could get their needs met and stay safe emotionally in the home. As a result, the child was treated as if they were "the golden child". This child also learnt that it is impossible to truly be loved for who they are and that they have to manipulatively meet other people's needs in order to get their own needs met. Everything in their life becomes a transaction and underneath almost every good deed they do is the expectation of getting something in return. Even though they appear to be helpful and giving, and even self-sacrificing, it is done with one thing in mind, themselves.

The environment between the children in a dysfunctional home and their primary attachment figure(s) is a hostile relationship on an emotional level and perhaps even on a physical level. As a result, the children cannot form healthy attachments to their primary attachment figure(s) and subsequently develop a selfish and hostile worldview because down deep they know they are not really loved for who they are.

As an adult, someone that grew up in this type of dysfunctional home dynamic will believe that the world is the same way as their relationship with their parent is; that the world is without warmth, acceptance and love. They close down emotionally. They believe that the world is unsafe and manipulative, and that everyone is out for themselves. They lose hope for being lovable. They

feel completely unworthy and embark on a mission to feel good about themselves. Not surprisingly, shame, distrust, rage and neediness accumulate over the child's life and bubble over into adulthood. In an unloving world, where they don't deserve love, they cannot get love and they cannot get their needs met freely from others. Therefore, they have to manipulate people to get what they need.

Many of those who seek fame do so because they grew up in environments like the one I've just described, and their lives have become a perpetual search for self-worth. The real reason that so many people in Hollywood can't make relationships work long-term is because this is their life story when it comes to love. Narcissism is not a disorder; it's an *adaptation*. The adaptation that is made to these kinds of external conditions is one that imbues a person with an impenetrable loneliness. Narcissism is not a state of malevolence. *It's a state of shame-based loneliness.*

Developmental trauma and shame-based loneliness

Developmental trauma delays or disrupts our natural growth process. Certain needs must be met in order for us to develop smoothly, not unlike a sapling that gets water and sunlight and grows into a tall tree. The tree is a *potential* within the sapling. If the tree's needs are met, its potential becomes fulfilled. Our expansion and growth is about our needs being met and the conditions being ideal for our potential to unfold.

Developmental trauma can freeze us in time, so even though we grow up physically we don't grow up emotionally or mentally in certain ways. We make the assumption that without those core needs being met, an adult is now grown up and therefore no longer has those needs. But that is not any truer than assuming that a tree will grow to be tall without receiving sunlight and water. An adult still needs to secure the things they lacked in childhood.

Our society has not yet recognized the truth about developmental trauma and, as a result, society is not set up to heal it. Healing requires offering to fill the basic needs that we would associate with an infant or young child; but we would need to supply that to an adult. I am convinced that in the coming generations this will be an area of incredible development within society. There will be centres designed to meet these needs. The questions for society are: "How do we create these missing infant and toddler experiences for adults? How can we meet those needs now so that the person naturally develops?"

Many parents and family therapists who work with toddlers say that it's a particularly challenging time because this is when a child is developing autonomy: a sense of self in relation to others. When developmental trauma

autonomy, a sense of self in relation to others. When developmental trauma happens, this area really doesn't develop and grow naturally.

The result is that even though someone's physical body turns into an adult, their self-concept never does. Neither does their ability to navigate the world of self and other. In essence, many people are simply toddlers walking around in adult bodies.

The roots of emotional neglect

The collective consciousness of mankind has been evolving over the course of history. We have seen many dark ages and many awakenings. And today, we are in the middle of what I call an "emotional dark age". Some individuals, yourself included, are in the process of awakening from this era, but what is it? It's the age of ignorance relative to emotions. Most people don't understand emotions. They neither know what function they serve nor what to do with them. This is a serious problem considering that emotions are the very basis of our life experience.

There are many awakenings that must occur relative to our understanding of emotions, but in this book I'm going to explain one of these specific awakenings because it's at the very core of our adult dysfunction. It's an epidemic that is responsible for more chronic unhappiness and suicide than all other causes combined.

Many of you reading this book will be aware of emotional abuse like deliberate threatening, shaming, humiliating, exploiting and isolating someone else, and this is just to name a few examples. But there is another form of emotional abuse, which is harder to recognize and leaves even deeper scars. It's this form of abuse that is today's epidemic and it's called *emotional neglect*. Shame is a huge by-product of emotional neglect.

The best way to understand emotional neglect is this. Instead of trauma caused by what *is* done, emotional neglect is trauma caused by what *is not* done. Keep in mind that the traditional expressions of emotional abuse can go hand-in-hand with emotional neglect. But a person can still emotionally neglect another person without overtly emotionally abusing them in the traditional sense.

How emotional neglect shows up in adults

Emotional neglect begins in childhood, so that's where we must begin. Let's look at the life of someone that suffered emotional neglect in childhood and let's call her Mary. Mary now has a successful job in a law firm. She grew up in a small little town in Colorado and was the youngest of three children.

When Mary looks back at her life, she had what anyone would consider to be a good childhood. Her family was financially successful, so she never wanted for anything. Her parents (who are still married to this day) never argued. They had low tolerance for negativity of any kind, so when any of the children would whine, complain or cry, they were promptly sent to their rooms.

Fast-forward to today. Mary is confused about why she is the way that she is. She doesn't know why she goes to bars on the weekends and drinks until she blacks out. She doesn't understand why she can't seem to create a successful relationship with a man. And she's deeply ashamed that she often fantasizes about suicide.

You may be confused as well, but let's look at Mary's life through the lens of *emotional neglect*. It's a parent's responsibility to be attuned to the needs of their child – not just food, shelter, water, clothing and hygiene – but also their emotional needs because children need to be seen, heard and felt. If a child doesn't get those things, there is no intimacy and this child lacks knowledge about how to form intimate friendships or relationships.

When a child is shamed for having emotional needs and wanting to have them met by the parent, the message the child receives is that there is something fundamentally wrong and unlovable about them. This child grows up being completely blind to his or her own emotional needs, as well as being very afraid of their own emotions.

Specifically, it's a parent's job to establish an emotional connection with their child, to give them the necessary undivided attention, seeing them as a unique, separate individual who has a right to feel the way they feel. But if a parent's emotional needs were not met when they were a child, how are they supposed to do a job that no one showed them how to do?

Looking now at Mary's childhood, we can see clearly that, though meaning well, for the sake of keeping a peaceful household, Mary's parents trained their children that if they were thinking or feeling anything negative, they had better keep it to themselves. Negative emotions were judged as bad and not tolerated. Every time Mary had these feelings, she would feel ashamed of them. She would isolate herself and not let anyone else see them.

As a young teen, she tried to escape those feelings of acute shame by drinking and still does. And, because she has always been so intent on hiding this shameful aspect of herself, she has never gotten past the third date with a man. She was always deeply lonely, and regardless of whether or not Mary's parents did actually love her, she did not *feel* loved as a child.

Long story short, Mary felt isolated from the world, as though she was on the outside looking in and no one knew her really. And so, she often thought, "What is the point of being alive?" One day, when Mary was feeling lonely enough, she

is the point of being alive! One day, when Mary was feeling lonely enough, she did take her own life. And no one saw it coming. It was a shock to everyone because no one knew how much pain she was really in.

Mary's parents loved Mary and all their children. On the outside, their family life looked perfect and even enviable. They were simply completely unaware of the emotional needs of their children and unwittingly, as a result of not meeting those needs, they taught Mary a few lessons that eventually led to her death.

Understanding what is missing

Most people who have suffered emotional neglect in childhood either keep their suffering entirely to themselves or they go from psychiatrist to psychologist trying desperately to figure out what is so wrong with them. Most are drowning in a sea of self-condemnation because they can't understand what has caused them to feel the way they feel.

This is because emotional neglect is not what you see but what you don't. It's the encouragement that didn't happen. It's the comforting that wasn't given. It's the loving support that wasn't offered. It's the loving words that were unsaid. It's the sense of belonging that was never granted. It's the understanding that was never reached.

All parents at this point in our history will emotionally fail their children at certain times. But it isn't the occasional failure that corrodes the foundation of a person's life enough to make their adulthood crumble. It's the chronic on-going failure to meet a child's emotional needs. And why is this an epidemic? Because emotional neglect is passed from generation to generation to generation, and each generation is completely unaware of it... until someone becomes *conscious* of it.

In fact many of the families that are inflicted with generational emotional neglect are the ones that consider themselves to be the closest. The family mantra may be, "This is such a great family!" yet every member of the family experiences loneliness, emptiness and difficulty with intimacy in relationships.

If your emotional needs were not met in childhood, you will have a difficult time meeting them as an adult. This is why emotional neglect is a major cause of unhealthy codependency. Now before you let yourself off the hook by saying, "I'm not codependent. I'm the most independent person I know. I couldn't have been emotionally neglected," let me remind you that independent people often have the most difficult time meeting their needs for closeness with others.

To heal the effects of emotional neglect, you must learn how to be authentic to yourself and to others. Keep in mind that true intimacy has nothing to do with

sex. True intimacy is to see, feel and hear the other person and to be truly seen, felt and heard by them. I will be covering both authenticity and intimacy in more detail in Parts [IV](#) and [V](#) if you feel that this is what you are struggling with.

How cover emotions work

No baby is born hating itself. We need to sit with this truth long enough to really absorb it. We only end up hating ourselves when the reflection we receive from the external world is rejection. If you experience self-hate today, some aspect of you was rejected or hated by those who were supposed to love you. And because you were never allowed to expose that truth of your life without it being invalidated, you *internalized* it and now you treat yourself the way that they treated you, as if something is inherently wrong with you and that you are bad and thus need to be punished.

Hatred is a *cover emotion*. Cover emotions function exactly like ice on the surface of a deep lake. In the same way that the ice covers the water, a cover emotion exists to cover another emotion below it. Ice on a lake prevents you from falling through it and into the water. The cover emotion prevents you from sinking into and feeling the emotion that it's designed to cover.

Cover emotions like hatred exist to keep us out of lower emotional states. They are natural defence mechanisms within the emotional body. Anger is often a cover emotion for fear. Desperation is often a cover emotion for despair. Numbness is often a cover emotion for shock or confusion. When we are able to finally and completely be present with an emotion, we often drop into an even deeper level of emotion. It's a bit like an emotional version of falling through the ice into the deep water below.

So let's consider hatred, which is a cover emotion for hurt. If we hate something, what we are really saying is, "I was hurt by that thing". If we experience self-hate or self-loathing, what we are really saying is that we *feel hurt by ourselves*. But the question is, how? If we feel self-hate, we felt emotionally rejected by a primary caregiver that was supposed to love us. Rage is a cover emotion for the complete helplessness and powerlessness that we felt when we were hurt by someone. It developed inside us because if we can do nothing to change the person who rejects us into someone that loves us, we are powerless and as a result we experience rage.

If self-hatred gets too bad, it can lead to selfharm. Interestingly, selfharm is not a behaviour solely demonstrated by humans. Animals who are captive also engage in selfharming behaviours. What does this teach us? It teaches us that the person who self-injures feels as if they are captive. Without exception, like a

caged animal, the cutter is in a prison where negative emotions, especially despair, hatred and rage cannot be expressed. And so those emotional states are internalized. There is nowhere for the energy to turn but *inward toward the self*. And so they are expressed upon the self.

Another aspect I want to touch on is selfabandonment. You'll recall in the last section about separation that I explained the concept of internal fragmentation, which can produce a number of Inner Twin personalities inside your body. When we think of ourselves as a singularity, as one unified thing, it's really hard to understand the concept of selfabandonment. How can we give up on ourselves? But when you think of yourself as all these different inner parts, you can conceptualize of the idea that one part within you could totally abandon another part within you. This is the essence of selfabandonment.

There are many forms of selfabandonment but here is an example. Imagine that one part within you is feeling really afraid, but another part ignores that fear, takes over the control and forces all of you to do it anyway. This is a form of selfabandonment. Imagine that one part of you feels vulnerable, but vulnerability is not acceptable. You identify with the thought, "I'm not weak, I'm strong". So you deny and suppress your vulnerability and work out hard so you can look tough. You want to beat up or shame anything in your external world that you perceive to be weak, but in doing so you have cut yourself off from the vulnerable aspect of yourself. Imagine that it become deeply suppressed in your subconscious. That is a form of selfabandonment. Essentially, selfabandonment is any time that one or more parts of you don't make space for, acknowledge and care for the needs of another part within you. As you can probably tell, our adult lives are pretty much an endless stream of selfabandonments.

The lesson of a dog

This is a difficult personal story for me to tell, but it contains some very important truths and lessons related to shame, so I will share it here. When I was in my early 20s, I adopted a wonderful little apricot-coloured French bulldog and named him Caput. When I was growing up, dogs were considered members of the family, just like children. They slept in the bed with you at night-time and they sat on the couch with you to watch TV; they got only the best. Caput lived like this for years. He was the most consistent thing in my life.

This dog saw me through the beginning and ending of several relationships and more than 17 moves. I was completely attached to him. But I was so starved for *secure connection* with a person that when I got into a relationship with a man who was not raised the way that I was around dogs, we ran into a conflict.

This man did not want dogs on the furniture and could not sleep with Caput snoring in the bed.

One night, my partner got particularly frustrated at not being able to sleep with the sound of Caput snoring and said that he would have to go sleep in another room. I felt the terror of abandonment. Being a person who suffered from extreme separation anxiety, I was in a position of having to choose between the feeling of abandonment and all the terror that it evokes or putting my dog in a different room with someone who could sleep with his snoring.

I told myself that Caput would feel confused but OK sleeping somewhere else as long as he was with someone. So, I took him to sleep with a fellow community member, Graciela. My conscience felt terrible, but less terrible than the terror of being left alone in my primary relationship by my partner. Caput still followed me around the house as usual and cried when I left the house.

But later that month, I had to go on my first three-week tour to Europe. When I returned home, Caput had replaced me with Graciela. Now he followed her around the house and it was her that he cried for when she left, no matter who else was in the house. *I felt betrayed*. I couldn't face the fact that it was me who had pushed him away first. I had betrayed him first and because I made myself unavailable he coped by becoming attached to someone else.

The next year, my entire intentional community moved to Costa Rica. We took all the pets with us because they were family members. Many circumstances changed and due to unforeseen circumstances, we had to split the community so that some people lived permanently in Costa Rica and others – like me and the community members that I depended on the most – lived between different countries.

One of these community members straddling the divide was Graciela. The government does not recognize animals as equal to humans and so they made it nearly impossible, as well as traumatizing, to travel back and forth between countries with animals. The best scenario seemed to be to leave Caput in Costa Rica with the permanent members of the community. Graciela decided this would be OK to do as long as people took good care of him.

When Graciela left, Caput suffered immensely. He cried for her for weeks and stopped eating. He was suffering from abandonment trauma. But then my manager arrived from Germany. Being an avid dog lover, Caput bonded to him when he arrived. They slept together in bed and Caput followed him wherever he went. The dog seemed stable again and like himself.

But sure enough, circumstances changed again and my manager had to go on the road with me. The day after he left, Caput cried incessantly. Some of the other community members tried to console him, but he became deranged. He

started to hyperventilate. They found him sitting in a shower basin staring at the wall and he refused to eat or drink. He became terrified of a lightning storm and near twilight one day he disappeared.

For days and then weeks, the entire community searched. Search parties scoured every single inch of the property and drove up and down every street of the town. Flyers with reward money were posted everywhere. Caput was ten years old at this point. He had never run away from anyone or any home in his life. He was the most people-dependent dog I have ever met. But no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't find out what had happened to him. I was tormented by guilt and worry about whether he was alive or dead somewhere. Eventually, we were all forced to see the lesson that Caput taught us through the tragedy of his decline and disappearance.

This is the bigger picture of what happened. The night that I made the decision to put him in the bed with Graciela instead of me, I justified it by thinking and feeling that Caput wasn't that attached to me, I was attached to him. The day that Graciela decided it would be OK to leave him with the community, she justified it by thinking and feeling that Caput was really my dog and wasn't really attached to her. The day that my manager decided it would be OK to leave him with the community while he went on tour, he justified it by thinking and feeling that Caput really belonged to the community and that he wasn't really attached to him.

The collective subconscious shadow of the community was that no one, including myself, actually recognized Caput's attachment to us. As a result, none of us could properly take responsibility for or care of the connection that *he did have with us*. The collective subconscious shadow that created this whole tragedy was shame. And the shame we felt had isolated each and every one of us.

How shame causes isolation

When you feel shame, you feel like something about you is so bad and so wrong that it's inconceivable that someone or something could be attached to and connected to you. You run around desperately trying to be valuable enough or to earn the right to *not be abandoned*. But because you don't believe that you are worthy of connection, it always feels like abandonment is right around the corner. The only attachment you can recognize is the attachment that you have to others. You cannot recognize the attachment that they have to you.

As a result, all of your relationships feel insecure. There is nothing holding you to belonging. And more importantly, as a result of not recognizing the

attachment that other people and things have to you, you cannot take care of that connection. Instead, you end up doing the opposite; such as telling yourself it doesn't matter if you call or don't call. It doesn't matter if you go or stay. It doesn't matter if you think about their best interests or not. In your mind, you can't possibly *matter to someone enough* to affect them in that way. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When we don't recognize the depth of the attachment or connection people have to us, and by not recognizing how they need us, we inevitably end up hurting them in ways where the message we send them is, "I don't really care about you". And so, eventually, feeling totally unloved by us, they do leave us. We then look at them leaving us, as they walk out the door, and say to ourselves, "See, I told you no one loves me and everyone will abandon me".

To sum up this incredibly important concept, if we live our lives from a self-concept of shame, we end up lonely because we believe people don't like us. We cannot recognize that other people *are* actually deeply attached to us and that they are connected to us and that they deeply need us. We don't feel it at all. If we did, we would feel people being with us. But we don't.

The demographic of people on Earth that feel the most alone is those who either die by suicide or try to attempt suicide. No one kills themselves if they genuinely see their worth to other people. One of the reasons that people can take their own life is that they don't feel other people's attachment to them. They are floating around in a world where they believe people could do without them or might even be better off without them. But you are connected and worthy of connection, regardless of how desperate you feel things are. It doesn't matter ultimately if you are worthy of having connection because the bottom line is: people are attached to you. There are plenty of people that we could look at and say, "That person doesn't deserve for people to be attached to them" and yet it doesn't matter because people are attached to them. People *are* connected to you and as such you are in the position of being able to truly and deeply hurt them by what you do and don't do.

Don't deflect your shame, own it

Owning your shame is the first key to ending shame. The opposite of owning shame is *deflecting shame*. Deflection is when something someone communicates causes the other person to feel triggered and as a result, instead of taking it in, that person either ignores it, denies it or turns away from it. Or even worse, that person might turn it back toward the first person.

Usually what is said triggers presently unresolved wounds of shame left over

from childhood. From a place of deep hurt, the person who was triggered *deflects* it. This is also sometimes called a projection. It's a projection of one's shame onto the other person.

Here's how it might work in a family. A mother can feel shame when her infant expresses negative emotion toward her. It makes her feel like a bad mother. But her ego can't handle that, likely because a long-standing inner wound was triggered, and so the mother deflects that shame back onto the infant. She decides the infant must have something seriously wrong with it. Another example could be a wife who cheats on her husband. She feels ashamed, but can't deal with it, so she makes it *his fault* because he didn't pay enough attention to her.

Among the most common situations that lead to shame deflection are boundaries. An example of this is a friend violates a boundary by borrowing something without asking. You get upset and tell them that wasn't OK. They feel ashamed and can't deal with it, so they decide that you are a terrible person and a lousy friend because you are stingy and selfish.

Now let's take it one step further. What if in this scenario, you had a conversation with them telling them it wasn't OK and you also added that you can't *believe* they would ever think that was OK, how stupid were they to think it was OK, then this would be perceived as *shaming*. The likelihood of the *shame* they feel being deflected back to you now would be 100 times higher. They would most likely then separate from you completely and reject you as a friend. You can see that this scenario can be further complicated when both people's shame is triggered and in response they both deflected it onto each other by blaming each other for the situation or for the way it was handled.

But there is a way to end this pattern in yourself and your relationships and thus end it in the world. There is a way to make relationships harmonious and stay connected. And that is to *own your shame*.

Here's how that might look. A man might feel defensive in a relationship argument about being *emotionally available*. He may tell himself that his partner is too needy. He has deflected his shame onto her by making her the bad one in this situation. But when he looks deep inside himself, he may realize that he is ashamed because he doesn't feel capable of being *emotionally present*. His realization of this helps him own his shame and deal with it.

If you are in a relationship, commit to making this idea of "taking ownership" a part of your conflict conversations. Decide that both of you are going to stop for a moment and introspectively try to discover what you feel ashamed about in the situation and then admit it to each other. It's a good technique, but I give you one warning: if someone is *admitting* their shame don't

allow your ego to use that as an opportunity to strike while their shields are down and to deflect your own shame deeper onto them. This would be abusive, like rubbing salt into a wound. Remember, our number-one terror is that by admitting to our shame, other people will use it to condemn us.

By owning your shame, you have the ability to end your conflict with yourself so you can become unified. And owning your shame, you have the ability to end conflict with other people and to be connected to them in a state of safety and love instead.

Mirror, mirror on the wall

As we have mentioned, the deep, visceral sense of shame is the result of swallowing the mirror. Our internal concept merely becomes the same as what is being reflected from the outside in terms of other people's reactions to us. This is the time to start questioning the mirror itself. How accurate is the reflection that you got or are currently getting? Is the mirror itself perhaps warped or distorted by something internal to the mirror itself?

The crucial thing to understand is that we can react toward other people in ways that have nothing to do with them. A mother who is stressed out because she has a difficult job and now has to take care of other people when she gets home from work is likely to consistently react in an exasperated manner toward her children. But that has nothing to do with the kids in and of themselves. If she cannot *own* that it has to do with her own feelings of stress and nothing to do with the kids and if she can't get it across to them that it has nothing to do with them, the children will grow up internalizing her on-going reaction during their childhood and developing the self-concept that they are a burden.

If we swallow the mirror and believe that something is wrong with us it means that our caregivers made *us* the problem. They deflected their own shame by blaming us for everything. The mirror we swallowed held the reflection that we carried all the responsibility for anything negative.

As a result, we develop into adults who take everything personally. This means that any time someone reacts to us in a negative way or any time something negative happens, we feel that it was our fault. We are the ones carrying the responsibility for that fault or wrong.

So now ask yourself this in a situation where you are taking something personally: is there something in the other person that could be distorting the reflection I am seeing? Here are some examples where something else could well be causing distortion. Consider that if another person was acting rude, could they be stressed with something else in their life, like a failed relationship? If they are furious at me, could I have triggered some unhealed wound from their

they are furious at me, could I have triggered some unhealed wound from my past? If they are treating me like I'm a slut, could it be because they have disowned their own sexuality? If they are treating me like I'm worthless because I have no money, could it be because their father traumatized them into feeling like they held no value unless they were financially successful?

Asking yourself these kinds of questions allows you to gain a wider perspective and keeps you from blindly accepting someone else's deflected or projected issues, which I have called "swallowing the mirror".

WHAT'S YOURS AND WHAT'S MINE?

If we struggle with shame, and as such seem to inherently take all the blame in any given situation – regardless of whether we want to or not – we have an impossible time separating what we are responsible for from what other people are responsible for in any given scenario. For this reason, I suggest that you get in the habit of doing an exercise where you discern "what's theirs" and "what's yours" in any given conflict or negative situation. Alternatively, you could do what's-mine-and-what's-not-mine exercise, if a situation isn't about an interpersonal conflict.

To do this exercise, take a piece of paper and make two lists. Put "Mine" at the top of one list and either "Theirs" or "Not Mine" at the top of the other.

Now, close your eyes and witness the negative situation from the third-person perspective. Witness it as if you were a genuinely objective bystander who is able to see and know all. And pick apart the situation for what part of the situation belongs to either column.

Here is an example that a client did relative to herself and her husband post-divorce:

HIS

- His parents have a classic codependent and narcissistic relationship and have raised him to relate in that same style in relationships.
- He was a child at the time and wasn't ready for marriage.
- He doesn't want to be there for a woman, he told me so himself.
- He is un-attuned and has said he doesn't care whether he hurts

people emotionally. His “honesty” is cruel.

- He decided to marry me even when he knew I had clinical depression... Assuming he wouldn't or shouldn't have to deal with that in the marriage.
- He “just gave up” with the pressure of taking care of me and didn't even communicate about it or even put effort into getting us help with it.
- He makes himself feel good by putting people down. He LOVES shaming.
- He didn't try to remedy the marriage at all, no therapy or anything, just filed for divorce.
- He made it about me being too hard to handle instead of admitting that he really doesn't want a serious relationship, he wants a trophy wife.
- He spins everything he does to hurt relationships into good things... for example, “It's good that I run in relationships, it's them who need to be run from”. He can't and won't see anything bad about himself.
- He is not committed at all. The minute the going gets tough, he gets going.
- He can't be in a relationship with someone who has needs and who needs anything from him. As he puts it “He won't sign on to be leaned on”. He wants an independent woman who does not depend on him at all. He sees dependence as “sickness”.
- He was so self-centred that when I was in labour he was focused on how much discomfort *he* was in because of feeling “sleep deprived” when I needed his support.

MINE

- I was so desperate for belonging that it didn't matter what man I was with. Because of this, I have NO discernment with men. I get like a starving person willing to eat poisoned food. I wasn't in love with him. I wanted to belong and I really wanted to belong with his family.
- I struggle with clinical depression. This is too much for some men.
- I married him one month after meeting him.

- I was obsessed with pregnancy and whether I was pregnant or not and even at that age even lied that I was to a few boyfriends because that equalled getting the belonging I was so desperate for. I wasn't concerned with whether the man I was with wanted it.
- I feel ashamed that I can't cope like "normal people".
- I didn't have the money for therapy at that time, which put a lot of pressure on my partner.
- I told him I could be a stay-at-home parent when I had no support system. This wasn't true. I didn't realize I couldn't do that – I couldn't see that as a limitation of mine.
- Deep down if I'm honest, I do feel I need a man to take care of me.

The antidote to shame is compassion

Compassion is a form of connectedness; it's spontaneous and goes beyond thought and language. We can say that compassion is a form of connectedness because it arises when we feel a sympathetic commonality with someone. In other words, we experience a *shared* felt experience of pain. There is a harmony inherent in shared feelings, the same way there is harmony in shared understanding. When we feel compassion, we feel sorrow, understanding and concern for the suffering of someone else or something else. Allow me to make the idea of how to develop compassion so simple for you that you will never be able to forget it. After you read this, compassion will no longer be an abstract concept.

Compassion naturally arises as a result of relating to someone's suffering. Therefore, all you have to do in order to feel compassion is to deliberately look at how you relate to their pain. If you are terrified of deliberately looking for how you relate to someone, you need to ask yourself "Why? What bad thing do I think will happen if I relate to this thing or feel close to this thing or if I am the same as this thing?"

The next step is to compassionately challenge the thoughts that arise as a result of asking these questions. This is the way you will find which part of you is behind your thoughts of being afraid and you can then have compassion for *it*.

Therefore, if you continue to struggle to have compassion for something, dedicate time to being present with that thing, learning about that thing and understanding it. Then deliberately look for *ways that you are the same as that thing*. From there, see if you can find ways that you relate to their pain. How is

your pain the same as their pain? Can you identify with their pain? Look back over the course of your life. When did you experience pain similar to what that other person is feeling? Try to remember what that felt like and what you thought. What did you really need back then when you were in that same kind of pain?

Upon this thoughtful analysis of yourself, you will find that the connectedness of compassion naturally arises. It can't help but happen once you assume a common perspective instead of a perspective where you continue to be separate from them and different from them.

I would really like you to fully grasp this technique because it will not only improve your life exponentially and make you less lonely, the bigger picture is that compassion is the single most critical thing for the human race to develop. And quite honestly, the survival of our own species depends on it. We are no longer in a place where we can wait for compassion to spontaneously occur. We now have to take steps to build capacity for it within ourselves. And it all begins with practising compassion toward the disowned fragmented aspects within us, which is where I am taking you next.

Meaning, the self-destruct button

When our inner evaluator is particularly active in response to feelings of shame, it is imperative to understand that we are seeing the world through a filter. You have adopted a way of seeing yourself and everything else in the world through the filter of shame. This means that you will interpret everything through the meaning "something is wrong and bad about me", regardless of the fact that this is *not* the actual meaning inherent in what you experience. Mankind has been searching for the meaning of every experience for thousands of years. What does this mean for us today? It means we search for a way of interpreting the implication of every experience in our lives. Seeking out the meaning of experiences is an advanced form of consciousness. But as we know all too well, there are usually pitfalls that come along with every advancement. An example would be being egotistical about being egoless. Humans are what I like to call a "pitfall species", where the very excellence of our particular form of consciousness becomes our very downfall. The ability to derive meaning is both something that sets our species apart as an evolved and rapidly expanding facet of consciousness as well as what causes us to self-destruct.

We encounter various experiences in our day-to-day life. Some we could consider positive and some we could consider negative. But *the quality of our experience relative to those experiences is flavoured by one thing and that is the*

meaning that we assign to the experience. It is well known that the experience of labour and birth can be drastically more or less painful from one mother to the next based on the meaning she assigns to the experience. Two people's experience of the same event is often drastically different based on the fact that they interpret different meaning out of the same experience.

Think of it this way, if you started uncontrollably vomiting right now and you thought that the meaning of the experience was that you didn't wash your hands well enough and had caught a deadly virus, your experience of that event would be drastically worse than if you thought that the meaning of the experience was that your body had begun to cleanse itself of all the toxins so as to become renewed to a state of health.

It is critical to recognize that there is a difference between what *actually happens* and the *meaning* of what happens. We must see that meaning does not inherently exist in the world in and of itself. Therefore, meaning does not inherently exist in a situation. It is an interpretation. And it is best not to confuse interpretation with truth. If meaning does not inherently exist in an experience, we must and do assign it to the experience and then we mistake the event and the meaning of the event for the same thing. Think of this like peanut butter and jelly. Peanut butter is the experience, jelly is the meaning we assign to the experience and if we stir the two together, we mistake them for one thing: a third substance. This disallows us to see the truth of an experience. We must learn to separate the peanut butter from the jelly or the experience from the meaning if we are ever to regain a sense of truth and learn to select meaning that benefits us instead of destroys us.

If you think this idea of assigning meaning to events doesn't sound too serious, consider that you can destroy your whole life based on the meaning you assign to an event. Case in point, a little girl asks her dad to play dolls at three years old, but he is on the phone. He yells at her to stop bugging him. This is a traumatic experience for her. She takes it personally. Now let's pretend the meaning she assigns to this event is "I am insignificant to my dad". That was not the meaning of the experience of the event for the father, the meaning for the father was, "I'm busy right now". But the moment that little girl assigns that meaning to the event, it is as if a coloured lens comes up over her eyes and from that moment on, all things that happen between her and her father are filtered through that coloured lens. The truth is now distorted by that perception that the meaning creates. Every time something happens between the father and daughter that causes her to feel bad, it will automatically strengthen that meaning she's perceiving her life through.

The coloured lens gets thicker and thicker until anything that doesn't

reinforce it, cannot pass through. This father could really love his daughter more than anything in his life and do all kinds of loving things, but it won't matter because all his actions are now being filtered through the lens of the meaning she adopted at three years old. The father has no idea why she is so angry with him as she grows up. The girl in this scenario is likely to grow up believing she is insignificant to men, just like she was to dad and will end up in relationships with emotionally unavailable men, covering up her misery with various addictions, wondering why her self-esteem is so damn low. Looking at this analogy of the coloured lens, doesn't this account for why two people can perceive the same thing so differently?

What I want you to consider is that the painful meaning you've assigned to your experiences, was never the actual meaning of those experiences. What we must consider is that we've been punishing people or avoiding them for a meaning that we ourselves assigned. What we must consider is that much of the pain we are experiencing in our lives is not due to what we actually experienced but the meaning we've assigned to those experiences. Doesn't this also make much more sense as to why we tend to be so confused about other people's defensive behaviour? It is important to note that conflicts about interpretation of meaning account for the majority of our more than frequent miscommunications with others.

Take a look back over your earliest memories. With each memory ask yourself, "What did I decide that it meant? What did I think was the meaning of the experience?" Then imagine that at that moment, your "meaning glasses" went on and you interpreted everything that was to follow up into your adulthood through those lenses. Does some of your life make more sense now? Do some of your relationships make sense now? What if the meaning you assigned to an event was not an accurate interpretation?

I am going to propose that from this day forward, whenever you encounter a trigger or an event that causes you pain, you ask, "What am I making this mean?" So that you can discern the difference between what is actually happening and what you think the meaning of the experience is. Doing this gives you the opportunity to set the record straight. For example, let's say that someone gives you a really crappy birthday present and you feel your heart sink. Ask yourself "What am I making this mean?" And the answer may be, "They don't really care enough about me to figure out what I like and want". At this point, instead of assuming that what actually happened is that they demonstrated that they don't care about you, you can either question this meaning you have assigned to the experience or you can authentically inform the other person of what you are making it mean and ask if that is in fact the actual meaning. This

gives them an opportunity to set the record straight. It also gives you the ability to not put those meaning glasses on in the first place and thus to remain illusion free.

Separate out the events that occur from the meaning you interpret from and assign to the event then question the meaning instead of assuming it. Take off those glasses that you put on so long ago. In turn, your whole world will become a whole lot clearer. In turn, you may actually begin to see that the things you experience in life may not actually mean that there is anything bad or wrong about you.

I can't change enough to be wanted and loved (the inner voice of self-evaluation)

If you struggle with deep loneliness, you experience a kind of shame that is “abstract”. I say it is abstract because even though you can list all kinds of things that are “wrong” about yourself, the ultimate answer to WHY you are so bad and so wrong that you are “unwanted”, which leaves you existentially alone, eludes you. We push things away when we don't want it for some reason. So, it's only natural that when other people push you away, you assume they are doing it because they don't want you because of some reason. This is the death of your self-concept. And what's worse is that for some of us, it's the *foundation* of our self-concept. You've been on a quest for the answer for what that reason is for a very long time so you can fix yourself so that other people will want you. But the *real pain* underneath it all is the feeling that “something” is wrong with you and bad about you but you can't change enough to be wanted. You resent yourself because of this. If this is true, you take it to mean that you'll always end up alone.

When you are in this emotional place of feeling like something is unlovable about you, people often say “you have to love yourself”, it just causes ten times more pain because what you hear is: “You have to love yourself because no one else will because there's nothing good enough to love and want about you.” We don't want to sit there alone and hug ourselves to sleep at night. What we want is connection with others. For this reason, I want you to forget the idea of loving yourself. Just drop it in a trashcan. And don't worry, you aren't going to be miserably lonely until the day you learn how to love yourself, as if that is some cruel test you have to pass to deserve relationships in your life.

The real pain of the shame pillar of loneliness is that it doesn't matter if you can't seem to find out what is so wrong about you and fix it so that other people will want you. You are powerless to do anything else. So the search-find-and-fix

mission becomes desperate and it is at this point that the part of us that was designed to evaluate ourselves, now becomes an internal abuser.

Again, I want you to think of your “self” as many personalities inhabiting one body. So much of the pain in your life is the result of the relationship (or lack thereof) between these internal selves. The more polarized we are, the more painful our internal world becomes because the more polarized we are, the more these parts are at war with each other and are in denial of each other. One of these parts within every person is a part that is designed to keep you in line with adopted standards.

When we are born, we come into a society where we must be raised for success within that society. Our parents, teachers, authority figures and peers, *et al.* take it upon themselves to teach us right from wrong and good from bad. They are focused on having us succeed at conforming to these standards, so they try to figure out what is wrong with us so they can fix those things. Even our school systems are designed this way. If a child is doing poorly at math, the school will focus on tutoring and extracurricular help to fix the problem so the child can improve at math. The result of this type of focus is a society where we are primarily focused on fixing each other. It may be loving in one way to want to fix someone so they can reach the standards of good and right, to avoid all the social consequences of not doing so. But when someone wants to fix you, it doesn't feel loving because the overall message they get is “there is something wrong with you”. We feel negatively judged by them.

We perceive negative judgements from the people in our family and society as being pushed away by them, which is both painful and super scary. Disapproval gets us isolated from, or punished by, the very people upon whom our survival depends. We adapt to these judgements in a specific way: we internalize them. In this way, we can become our own police officer keeping ourselves in line so we can avoid being judged by other people. The judgements that you will try to live up to are the internalized judgements of the specific social group that you grew up in. For this reason, if you grew up in a society that demanded excellence and achievement, the part of you that has internalized these expectations and judgements will focus on holding you to a high standard of excellence and will tell you how terrible you are doing at everything. On the other hand, if you grew up in a society that demanded humility, the part of you that has internalized these expectations and judgements will focus on keeping you small and will criticize you for thinking that you're anything special.

When we put enough energy into a pattern like selfcriticism, it becomes its own fragment within our personality spectrum. It becomes an inner self or inner part that tends to take on a life of its own. Every person who has been socialized, no matter where they grew up or what society they were raised in, has this inner

no matter where they grow up or what society they are raised in, has this inner self that criticizes them. This self acts like a negative narrator constantly commenting on you and your life. No matter how much you try to please this aspect of you and live up to its standards, you can't. It doesn't matter how much you try to change and obey it, nothing will ever be good enough to make it grow quiet; instead, it will get louder the more you try to please it. This inner voice is designed to keep you safe from being shamed by others by being the one that shames you from the inside. Essentially, it criticizes you before anyone else has the chance to. This voice is absolutely desperate in a painful way to make us a success according to our adopted definition of success and to make us approved of by people within our society. Obviously, this method of coping with the world is in fact a set up for a life of self-shaming.

The saddest part about this inner part of us is that we don't realize it is an adaptation within us. We think it literally *is* us. Most people experience an internal monologue that comments on the world and tells us what is wrong with us. This is the inner voice. If we grew up in a shaming environment, the inner voice becomes abusive. It is at this point that we are living with an internal emotional abuser. We eventually have to come up with ways to *cope with this voice* that we mistake for our inner self.

If someone has decided that they hate you and that you are a terrible person, you can't win. If you run, they will tell you that you're a failure because you didn't swim. If you swim, they will tell you that you're a failure because you didn't run. When this inner voice aspect of us becomes abusive, it turns into an internal hater. You can't win and everything will be used against you. If you need someone, it will tell you that you are codependent and pathetic. If you are independent, it will tell you that no one loves you and that you're incapable of having relationships. If you get angry, it will tell you that you have a psychological problem. If you learn that your mind creates reality and you get cancer, it will tell you that you're a total failure because you can't control what you think because now you're to blame for having cancer. If you want to succeed at something, it will tell you all the reasons and ways you *can't* until you don't even take a step forward for fear of failing. It will tell you all the unlovable things about you in an attempt to get you to fix them, but you will feel so powerless about fixing those things that instead, you will simply isolate yourself from other people. It will take everything you learn as a weapon to use against you.

This aspect of you is like the parent whose love is abusive. It is like the parent who is so desperate for you to avoid failure and hurt and shame, therefore to see you succeed, make enough money, find the perfect relationship, get the

reputable job and be seen well by society that they end up suffocating you with pressure. What is important to see is that this voice that keeps you drowning in shame is actually the part of you that wants the very best for you. You have to see the motive of this inner fragment of you in order to be able to integrate this aspect into the rest of your being. Regardless of what you have been told in the past by other people, *it is not actually against you*. Instead, it is your most inverted advocate.

There is a way to turn this inner dynamic around so that it works in our favour. When we begin to feel bad, we can “tune in” to these internal thoughts and self that this voice and these thoughts are coming from. We can witness what it is saying and specifically look for the vulnerability that is beneath each of its expressions. This process is a bit like seeing smoke and in response going looking for the flames. For example, let’s say that you attend a dinner with some friends and you say something and notice the slightest reaction in one of the people at the table that you interpret as a negative response. Maybe this inner aspect of you is saying things like “you’re always such an idiot, why did you have to say that? You blew it this time, they’re probably talking about you now as we speak.” That is the smoke. The flames underneath it is the vulnerability. The vulnerability is something like, “I feel so powerless to do and say the right thing and I’m terrified that if I say the wrong thing, people will reject me.” You can begin to perceive the pain you feel in your body, and the thoughts and inner voice behind them, as coming from an aspect of you that is like a smoke alarm. Every time it starts speaking, it is alerting you to the presence of fire. Something is threatening and painful to you on a deep level and it needs your help to deal with it.

If we look at this internal self-evaluator as if it is the aspect of us that asks us for help to immediately change a situation that could cause us rejection, we begin to see that these painful feelings are not trying to hurt us. Instead, they are screaming out for *our* help. So what do we do then? We help it. We help it by directly addressing the flames. The flames in this case are the vulnerable feelings underneath the barrage of criticism. We can begin to understand the underlying fear that is motivating the criticism that this aspect of you is giving to the rest of you. For this self, shame is the number-one thing it is trying to keep away from. For this reason, we could see this inner evaluator as a veneer that has grown over the inner child so as to hide it from view. If we saw this to be the case, we could start to caretaker that terrified, vulnerable and shamed aspect of ourselves in a delicate way, as we would a child. This is the approach that will actually create internal integration. The approach we usually take, when we have fallen for the veneer, is to think that we have an internal abuser who is an enemy to us. We

never see the vulnerable aspect of us below it that is the one that actually needs the loving support. When we begin to caretaker the vulnerability underneath the violence of the internal evaluator, it ceases its attack.

Here is an example, let's say that you get into a fender bender. You immediately get angry at the other person for stopping too fast or for not paying attention. If you pay attention to the internal evaluator however, it's probably saying things like this: "You should have been able to avoid that accident. Where the hell was your mind? Now look what you've done. This is going to cost money and let's face it, because you have a crappy job, you don't have any." If we recognize this internal emotional violence and we see it as smoke, we can look for the vulnerable truth underneath it. The truth is, this situation is overwhelming. It's too hard for part of us to handle. The vulnerable truth is something like this: "That was terrifying and I'm in shock and I'm afraid that I don't really know if it was my fault or not and if it is my fault, I'm afraid of getting in trouble and of painful consequences. I don't know what to do right now." Just by acknowledging that vulnerability, we have offered our conscious presence to it and that has a soothing and supporting effect.

If we want to go even further with this process, we can then close our eyes and ask to see an image in our mind's eye of the part of us that is feeling those vulnerable feelings. Perhaps we will begin to see the image of a six-year-old child that is huddled in the corner. We can imagine ourselves going over to the child and holding them. We can then validate the way they feel by saying something like this: "It makes complete sense why you would feel so terrified right now. That came out of nowhere and it does feel confusing. And it must be really scary to feel like you're going to get in trouble. You don't need to know what to do right now." Validating the feelings is the most crucial step. Doing this allows us to move through our vulnerable feelings. You can then focus on how to soothe this child and meet its needs. You can explain to them that you are not going to let him or her get in trouble. You can bring a safe support figure, like an angel or a grandparent there to nurture and comfort this child and assure them that you are going to go deal with the situation and that they don't have to be involved. You can tell them things that make the situation seem less doomed like, "I have good insurance for things like this so we won't lose anything." Or "The other person is terrified too. If they weren't feeling just as vulnerable as you, they wouldn't be acting how they are acting right now." This internal aspect is actually a part of you so, by doing this, you are taking care of your own vulnerability instead of succumbing to a shame that seeks to get you to "shape up" so as to avoid the vulnerability.

The internal evaluator becomes the spokesperson for your vulnerability.

When we hear it speaking, we have the power to decide to address the vulnerability directly it is defending by acknowledging it as well as the past wounds that created it and then come up with solutions to soothe the vulnerability itself. Doing this ensures that we won't perpetually live our lives in an atmosphere of shame.

Getting to know the three selves

In Part I, I explained that even though we identify ourselves as one person with one personality and one name, the truth is in fact much different than that. You are now aware that we all have multiple selves or aspects of ourselves, our Inner Twins.

When a person grows up in an atmosphere of shame, that individual fragments internally in a way where some of their inner selves develop specifically to hold shame or to protect that person from the vulnerability they feel. To help you grasp this concept, it's helpful to imagine that there are three distinct kinds of selves that we tend to develop in response to shaming and to circumstances that cause us to feel the vulnerability of shame specifically.

1. We develop selves that are the embodiments of whatever we were shamed about so we can keep those traits away from the personality that we show to the world. For ease of understanding, I call this one the "Shame Self".
2. We develop selves that are the embodiments of our vulnerability and this one can be called the "Vulnerable Self".
3. And we develop selves that are the embodiments of whatever we believed would protect our vulnerability from the world. This one can be called the "Protector Self".

You may not be used to this kind of thinking so here's an example from my life so you can start to grasp this concept, starting with the Shame Self that I struggled with.

I was raised by a mother who was a bra-burner in the 1960s with the women's rights movement. Having watched the continual objectification of women in her childhood, she dramatically rebelled against the sexualisation of women. When I began to come into my own sexuality and wanted to wear make-up, high heels, dress sexy and flirt with boys, my mother had a visceral negative

reaction to it. She looked at me with disgust, made derogatory remarks and told me that I was destroying everything she and the women of her time worked so hard for.

The shaming failed to motivate me to alter my behaviour, as I had no desire to become more sexually conservative. But deep down, I felt extreme shame about myself as a *sexual being*.

I was also raised in a conservative Mormon town and so the rest of society treated me like a slut too. Even though I never hid my sexuality, I discovered a Shame Self within me that took the shape of a *siren*. In my mind's eye, she appeared as a beautiful naked woman on a rocky island, a bit like the old images of Aphrodite. She was fixed to the rock, unable to move and in a state of despair because all around her feet were the skeletons of men.

In my mind's eye, I could see that she was starving for partnership, love, security and permanent connection, but every time a man came to shore and was enticed by her obvious beauty, her eyes would turn into laser beams against her own will and the man would be struck down to rot at her feet. She couldn't move so she couldn't hide her beauty, therefore it was fate that men would continue to be lured in and killed. She felt totally powerless to prevent this.

When I first saw this Inner Twin personality, my initial reaction was to be repelled by it. I judged her as evil. It wasn't until I recognized the desperation and despair within her, as well as the fact that she didn't want the men to die, that I began to understand that she simply couldn't do anything to prevent it. I realized that my sexuality was the true root of this shame Inner Twin.

The message was that I couldn't hide the fact that I have always been sexually attractive. But I had been led to believe *it was harmful and dangerous to others. It was evil. Not being able to stay in touch with this bad or wrong* aspect of me, it fragmented into the form of a siren within me and she became my Shame Self in this scenario.

To make a long story short, I entered a meditative inner journey where I imagined cutting her out of the rock and feeding her an elixir that prevented her eyes from shooting laser beams. I took her off the island on a small boat and drove her to a city, where I gave her to the care of a man who could be her soul mate and who would cherish her completely.

These Selves tend to be the ones we are the most resistant to integrating. We have a disapproving and rejecting attitude toward them. We want them to be fixed, to change, to go away or to be exorcized from us. But this attitude simply reinforces the atmosphere of shame within our own being.

How other Inner Shame Twins arise

HOW OUR INNER SHAME TWINS ARISE

In my case, I developed a Vulnerable Self, which presented as an innocent and pretty pre-teen named *Lily*. *Lily* was a personality that developed after being deeply shamed for daring to wear a bit of eye make-up and some red lipstick. She presents as a pale-faced and scared little girl dressed in a heavy brown sack-like dress with long sleeves and tatters that drag on the floor.

Although she was only a child, she felt vulnerable to shaming for experimenting with attention-getting make-up and clothes. *Lily* was the Inner Twin embodiment of my vulnerability of shame relative to sexuality as a young girl, as opposed to being the imagined embodiment of what I was shamed specifically about.

The Protector Self is an Inner Twin personality that develops in order to protect both the Vulnerable Self and the Shame Self. Using myself as an example, it is what protects *Lily* (my Vulnerable Self) and the *siren* (my Shame Self) from the outside world. This Protector Self was called *Seeker*. Because this Inner Twin needed the type of persona that no one would mess with and one that would adequately hide the shame of the other two. As a child, I had watched a few episodes of *Xena Warrior Princess* and this Inner Twin was based on this character. The other two selves were feminine and held the shamed aspects of sexuality within me, but this self was masculine and non-sexual.

If you knew me as a young woman, you might have sometimes seen my own protective Inner Twin come bubbling up in real life when this *warrior*-type personality would take over my actions. Those would have been times when I reacted in a rough and masculine way, dressed in combat boots, cut my hair short and refused to play with girly things.

Inside you, the process of fragmentation in response to the trauma of shame created Inner Twins like these ones I have just described. And each has their own agenda, and not always one that is conducive to one another or to the whole.

Fortunately however there are some good aspects about all of these Inner Twins and the next exercise will help you repurpose them in order to heal the inner turmoil.

HOW TO REPURPOSE THINGS YOU NO LONGER NEED

If you think you developed a Shame Self in your childhood that is no longer working for you, you can seek out the answer and solution yourself.

First, go inside yourself and try to notice when you feel really bad or

First, go inside yourself and try to notice when you feel really bad or deeply ashamed about yourself and ask to see the part of you that you feel bad about. Allow whatever appears to appear, and then address this inner Shame Self with compassion. Express to this Shame Self Inner Twin your desire to fully understand it so you can ultimately accept it as a valuable part of yourself.

Here is a step-by-step process to help you with this.

1. We unearth and acknowledge the vulnerability and past wounding underneath any shame, vulnerable and protector personalities that might have developed within ourselves.
2. We directly strategize ways to take care of these vulnerable aspects within us by seeking to compassionately understand them and meet their needs.
3. We repurpose them, using the unique needs and gifts within each part (within each of the three Inner Twin selves in this case), and then we integrate them with the rest of our internal personalities so all of them understand that they are *wanted* and *needed* by us. Our goal is to provide connection and belonging within ourselves. Once they know and are aware of each other, that awareness naturally leads to connection and integration.

In my scenario, here is how step 3 might proceed. I found that my Inner Twin named *Lily*, the Vulnerable Twin, had unique needs and gifts that had to be met and appreciated. She needed to be accepted for her pretty features and accepted for wanting to wear nice clothes and make herself attractive. I found that she had a lovely sense of style and fashion sense which was never allowed to be expressed, but now as an adult I could let her express these legitimate needs and natural talents, and I happily embraced this long-lost part of myself.

My Inner Twin that was the *siren* was dealt with as I mentioned above, in a meditative inner journey where I visualized myself healing her by cutting her out of the rock and I gave her an elixir so her eyes would no longer shoot laser beams. She was the embodiment of my own sensuality and had needs and talents that had been long buried, including that she was desperate to be loved.

I met my *siren* needs by allowing my full femininity to be expressed in beautiful flowing, colourful gowns in my real life, and I used her intense creative sensuality as part of the expression within my art projects whenever I felt that urge come through. By repurposing her talents, my art became infused with even

more beautiful feminine energy. In my mind, I imagined her safely off the island where she had been imprisoned, and I mentally envisioned putting her in the care of a soul mate who would cherish her completely, thus meeting her need to be loved.

The Protector Twin, Seeker, had backbone and clear boundaries. So I kept those aspects and repurposed them in my life to make me stronger and better able to express my boundaries to others and hold to them. Seeker needed to keep the peace and maintain a safe environment, so I used her to help fulfil this need. I let her be in charge of discerning which people around me did not want my highest good or who were only interested in my surface appearance, and in doing so I removed a level of risk that I no longer wanted in my life. Without so much to worry about or protect me from, *Seeker* agreed that she no longer had to be so overtly male.

In these ways, you can see that I took the best of each of my Inner Twins and repurposed those talents. I came to understand their needs and took action to meet those needs. I also introduced the inner Twins to each other and made them aware of how their previous extreme actions were not working for the other Twin or for the whole of me in my life.

Once they all knew the bigger picture and their individual needs were being met, their increased awareness naturally led my Inner Twins to work in harmony and connection. I felt so much more at peace and my life improved significantly. Yours can too by following these steps. You can heal, integrate and harmonize any number of Inner Twins in this way.

Shame and the justice system

There is no such thing as a truly malevolent act in this universe. Every act is done for one reason and one reason only: the person believes that doing it will help them to feel better. The desire to alleviate personal suffering is the reason for every murder committed, every drug taken, every robbery, every fight, every purchase made and every relationship we get into. The desire to feel better is not a malevolent desire. These acts are committed because in the moment, we cannot work out a more effective way to feel better. They are all done to escape from vulnerability instead of to caretake it directly.

Did you hear that? Every crime committed is committed in order to try to escape from a vulnerability so the person doesn't feel it instead of to caretake it directly. For example, a wife cheats on her husband and he kills her because the vulnerable feelings of jealousy, which is about loss and low self-worth, are so painful to him that he wants to escape from them so he doesn't have to feel them. Instead of acknowledging that vulnerability and directly addressing it and

them. Instead of acknowledging that vulnerability and directly addressing it and finding strategies to soothe that vulnerability, he simply kills her so as to get the one that is triggering that vulnerability out of his life. These individuals developed complex Inner Twin personalities early in their lives, not unlike we all have, but theirs have caused them to lash out violently or against social norms and they have ended up in the justice system.

Today, when people commit crimes because they are trying to escape their vulnerability, including the vulnerability of shame, we lock them up in harsh and often dangerous environments to punish them and remind them every day about how bad they really are. We isolate them so as to teach them that they don't belong in society because of how bad they are.

When we punish people, we don't realize that we are not just punishing people's Protector Inner Twins, we are punishing their Vulnerable Inner Twins and Shame Inner Twins as well. This only reinforces the shame. And they are separated from society and isolated, which actually reinforces their suppressed vulnerability that created the criminal activity in the first place.

By reinforcing their suppressed vulnerability, we fuel their Protector Twins even more. We don't realize that like any protector, the Protector Twin's personality can surge to the forefront and become hurtful, dangerous and even deadly, all in the name of protecting something that is vulnerable. *The result?* The justice system is creating even more dangerous criminals.

We have the chance to end this pattern of torment. A new justice system would operate according to the principle that the people we are most ashamed of, those we label as criminals, need their vulnerabilities and wounds to be unearthed, taken care of and resolved. They need to be brought closer into a state of belonging and integration within society, not pushed further away.

Ultimately, we will begin this movement within society by ending this pattern of torment within ourselves. As we have determined, the aspects of you that you are ashamed of need to be brought closer to a state of belonging with you, not pushed further away. And by doing so, you can use their unique characteristics to benefit every other part of yourself. This brings an end to shame.

We can and should apply this same logic and the three steps that I describe above to help prisoners, addicts and anyone struggling with shame so they too can fully heal, get their inner needs met and have a chance at a better life.

Practising exaltation

When we suppress our emotions, which all of us must do at one point or another,

those suppressed emotions become part of our personality, and also part of our identity. We begin to see them as *ourselves*. Resisting any aspect of yourself is asking for emotional disaster. It's self-hate. Regardless of whether you resist something positive or negative within yourself, it's self-hate and therefore it's self-destruction.

So what's the solution? The solution is *exaltation*, which is an ancient alchemical concept. Simply put, *to exalt* something is to transform something into its highest spiritual aspect. For example, alchemists thought that the exalted form of metal was gold. If we are to live better lives, where we are not continually made unhappy by our negative personality traits, we must take each personality trait we don't like and first recognize it within ourselves. We must accept it by first owning it and then finding a way to approve of it. The last step is to find a way to amplify that personality trait into its most exalted expression.

Here's an example of exaltation. Let's say you felt unloved as a child and were punished for trying to get the love you needed. You suppressed those feelings of resentment and powerlessness. Over the years, the powerlessness and resentment has become part of your personality. It has caused you to exhibit certain chronic behaviours. Chief among those behaviours is that you are an *energy vampire* because you believe that you are not allowed to ask for the things you need, so you manipulate people to get the energy you need from them.

Over time, this personality trait has become so much a part of you, that one could say it's part of your personality. You cannot overcome it and you can't eradicate it because it's part of who you are now. So, your only choice is to take that negative personality trait and channel it into something positive.

Let's look at how to do this. You are an *energy vampire*, so you are also a master at manipulating energy. You could turn this around and become a brilliant energy worker or natural healer. After all, you already have the capability of consciously pulling in negative energy and transmuting it inside your own body. You could do this for other people, essentially feeding off of the illness and discordant energy you remove from other people, rather than stealing life force from people's bodies the way you do now. You can manipulate energy to heal people.

Or here's another approach. Since you've been an *energy vampire* for so many years, you are a master at mental chess. You play mind games with people. So, the highest aspect of that trait (what we call the "exalted aspect") is to play mind games with people that will benefit them. You could become a brilliant counsellor or psychologist. You could outsmart other people's egos and help them to see things about themselves that they are totally unaware of.

Perhaps your issues are different ones. How do you work out what you might need to transmute? Start by describing yourself. What problems do you have? What do you feel are the negative parts of your personality? Be very honest about what traits you don't like about yourself. Once you have your list, spend some serious time thinking about what the highest and best use of those same traits could be. In other words, what is the positive exalted form of those negative traits?

For example, maybe I am anxious. The exalted form of being anxious could be that I am sensitive to the energies around me. I could be a talented interior decorator because I can feel the way that energy moves around a room. I am sensitive to the placement of objects and the influence that colours have on our emotions. I could design homes for people that make them feel exactly how they want to feel upon coming home.

Maybe I am a bully. Bullies push people. The exalted form of being a bully could be that I push people to be their best. I could embrace my forceful energy and use it in situations where people could benefit by that force, such as when someone needs especially strong encouragement. Bullies establish dominance within a social group. The exalted version of this dominance is leadership. I could embrace my leadership ability and take charge when other people feel they are looking for direction. I could easily take the initiative and rally people to cooperate with one another.

The selfaffirming angle

In all moments, we are at a crossroads. We can choose to look at ourselves from a self-defeating angle or from a selfaffirming angle. If we want to break free from shame, the more we can look at ourselves from a selfaffirming angle, the better. At first, this will feel like a chore.

FIND WHAT YOU DISAPPROVE ABOUT YOURSELF

Take a sheet of paper and write on it the names of each family member and significant people in your early life. Under their names, write the criticisms they used to give you or the things they would make you feel ashamed about. For example, if you feel defensive about certain criticisms they gave you and are convinced in an offended way that they are *not right*, recognize that this is you rebelling against their criticism. This means there is an

insecurity underneath it that they might be right. If you feel emotional about any sort of early criticisms in your life, it's a guarantee that those aspects are things you disapprove of about yourself today, so they are traits that you can turn around through exaltation.

The other technique is to take another sheet of paper and using the hand you don't usually write with allow your own internal evaluator to go completely wild listing all of the things it thinks are wrong, bad or not up to standard about you. No matter how poor your handwriting is, it's harder for the conscious mind to interfere with the process. You are more likely to access some truths about what you disapprove of about yourself that you weren't consciously aware of before.

Note that this is not the same thing as using affirmations. In general, affirmations are a cover up. They are palliative, like novocaine, and do nothing to heal the actual issue that is causing the pain. They actually serve to make internal fragmentation worse because when we create an affirmation, such as "I love and accept myself", we are setting a standard for our self. A new expectation, and also we are affirming a reality as the only reality that we will accept. Therefore, the parts of us within that don't feel loved and potentially feel hate toward other parts feel denied, silenced, offered no space, feel more deeply suppressed into the subconscious, as if they have no opportunity to get genuine help and also held to a standard that they cannot meet.

What I am proposing is not a superficial or denial-based approach. What I am proposing is that every element of your life, whether it is a situation, character trait, event, pattern or anything else, can be seen from two angles. A selfaffirming angle and a self-defeating and self-negating angle. Neither perspective is more or less true than the other. Only one is totally void of compassion and therefore propagates internal separation and provides us with no opportunity for integration or positive progression.

For example, if I was abused, I may not be able to experience pleasure during sex and I may be addicted to cigarettes as a way to numb out my pain. I could look at myself from a self-negating and defeating angle of "I was ruined and now I'll never have a good sexual relationship so no one will ever want to be with me and now I'm just a useless addict who can't quit". That is one perspective or angle. And we need to genuinely find and practise compassion for the part of us that holds this perspective. What we *also* need to do, and this comes as much more difficult to do, is to allow the opposite part of us to speak. If we feel shame, this side of us cannot be accessed unless we caretake the one

that holds the self-defeating perspective. The side of us that we need to get into the perspective of is the one that can see us from a selfaffirming angle.

Going back to the previous example, this side of us might look at us like this: being abused has put me in a place where I am now going to figure out what is a healthy sexual relationship. Most people don't know the answer to this. Most people just have sex and don't put thought into it. Potentially I could have a better sexual relationship than most people on the planet because of this. And thanks to cigarettes, which numbed out my pain and still do, I could keep on living. People in the hospital need morphine sometimes so they can go on living and their bodies can eventually heal. I wouldn't expect someone whose bones were smashed in a car wreck to lie there crying without morphine. Maybe I can keep dedicated to progressing and let myself have some relief until the day comes that I don't need it anymore.

CREATE A BOX OF SELF-ESTEEM

One of the exercises that I suggest doing if you struggle with shame is to create a container or a chest that is specifically filled with things that cause you to feel better about yourself. Make sure the chest or container itself is something that appeals to you. You wouldn't give someone who you highly respect a gift in a dilapidated box, so don't do that to yourself. Make your box something you love.

For this box, you can include memorabilia of any outward or inward achievements. These can be things like trophies, medals, diplomas or pictures of you at the top of your game. Or they can be cards or letters of thanks or encouragement that you've received, or messages of approval and praise from other people.

Inside this container somewhere should be a list that is as long as you can possibly make it of the things that are good and right about you. This list can contain your strengths, skills, positive personality traits, positive things you've done or how you have positively contributed to other people. You can also put your approval lists, from the previous exercise (see [page 83](#)), where you found approval for the things you used to disapprove of about yourself, inside this box. Include literally anything that can serve as proof that you are in fact *good*.

From there, get creative about what unique things could go inside your self-esteem container. Feel free to add pictures that make you feel good and

anything that reminds you of movies, music or books that make you feel good about yourself. Include images of people who you identify with and feel you are similar to that you feel 100 per cent positive about.

The potential for what could go into this container is endless. After you address the shame and vulnerability directly when it arises, you can then train yourself to get this container out and look through it so you can get back in touch with feelings of self-esteem.

When you are doing this exercise, I don't want you to think of it as an exercise where you are using the selfaffirming perspective to invalidate the other perspective. I want you to think of it as an exercise where you are seeing both perspectives. This is like letting some light into a dark room. If you struggle with shame, chances are you don't usually open that door to let the light in. Or when you do, you do it to try to eradicate the darkness instead of letting them mix and integrate with one another.

The light shining through the window

When it comes to the concept of self-worth, the first thing we need to do with it is to throw it away. "Worth" is a completely abstract concept. You cannot objectively determine the value of something. Worth has no basis in reality because it's so subjective. The criteria created to determine a person's worth is entirely dependent upon the society into which they're born.

Think of it this way. The quality of *being present* is worthless in a society that values *doing*. The quality of external beauty is worthless in a society for the blind. Perhaps the main reason that you feel like you have no worth is due to the very real qualities which you came in with, qualities that would have held infinite value to other people, were not considered valuable to the people that comprised your family or the culture or society into which you were born.

For example, if you were born with artistic talents but landed in a family that valued scholarly intellect above all else, they may not consider your gifts valuable and therefore you would have received the message that *you* were not valuable. However, if you would have been born into a family of artists your gift would have been instantly recognized as valuable, and therefore you would have felt as if *you* were valuable.

We have to get used to the idea that worth and value is completely subjective, variable, often irrational and dependent upon circumstance. True human worth is impossible to determine.

Instead, consider that true human worth is like light that shines through a window. You are born with it and it's always there. All people are born with it. Over the course of your life, the traumas that you go through and the times other people fail to see that light become like dust and cobwebs that cover the window and may prevent the light from shining through. But if you remove the cobwebs and dust, you realize the light never stopped shining. *It was always there.*

The mosaic

When we feel shame, we feel broken inside. This is ironic because it's not altogether an inaccurate feeling. We have already seen that if you feel shame, you are in a state of internal fragmentation. Therefore, instead of being in a state of internal integration, you can feel like shattered glass inside.

We all wrestle with *what is* due to an intolerance of things the way they are and wanting to change them. This tendency is a beautiful thing because it improves our lives and our world. If we tolerated the fact that we could not fly, we would never have invented the plane, for example. However, some people don't simply wrestle with what is, they become warriors against the status quo. This kind of unwillingness to accept what is can become a great source of suffering, especially when we can't change certain things about *what is*. And in fact, it prevents us from being happy.

Here's an example. Let's imagine that someone is a paraplegic. They might fight for years against the fact that they cannot walk and need a wheelchair. Eventually, this fight against being paralysed may become the very source of their suffering. However, if they can accept the fact that they are paralysed, meaning they recognize it as valid, they will feel relief. This acceptance may allow them to take totally different steps than they would have taken in their life before that point.

For example, instead of spending money on physical rehab, which was reinforcing the feeling of total defeat and making them feel suicidal, they may now spend that money on hiring someone to teach them how to sit-ski. If they find approval in their being paralysed, they might even go one step further and become a spokesperson for the Paralympics and embrace a leadership position as a role model for other people with disabilities. This then becomes a form of deep integration.

Begin to think about this process of integration and inner growth, which can also be thought of as your path to *internal connectedness*, like creating a mosaic. Personally, I have always loved mosaics because to me they are a metaphor for life on Earth. Each person on Earth has the potential to be a mosaic.

Imagine that when you came here to Earth, you arrived as a whole piece of

Imagine that when you came here to Earth, you arrived as a whole piece of glass knowing that your life experience would shatter you into a thousand pieces. It's undeniable that this process creates great suffering. You may spend years resisting the fact that you have shattered and hating that you are broken. But if you want to truly live, you can look at these shattered pieces of glass in terms of their beauty and potential.

If you accept these shards, or even better if you find approval for them, you can use them as tesserae. You can put them back together again, but this time in a new form that is an infinitely more exquisite piece of art than the single sheet of glass you were to begin with. We all have the ability to create our self into a beautiful mosaic so why not try this and see how it feels?

Follow your true nature

Creating a mosaic is a beautiful visual because there is no way that we can be authentic or achieve a state of genuine love if we remain fragmented and fractured. We can't keep disowning and rejecting negative and positive aspects of ourselves and each other. If you're willing to be uncomfortable enough to fully see yourself and others, you are well on the way to authenticity and wholeness. You deserve to own your truth fully and strongly.

There is a famous children's story by Janell Cannon (1993) about a baby bat named Stellaluna. In the story, Stellaluna finds herself in a nest full of birds. The birds adopt Stellaluna as one of them. But each time she hangs upside down, as bats do, or makes faces of disgust when she is fed the bugs that are a bird's natural food, she is reprimanded.

Eventually Stellaluna disowns her bat nature and learns to be like the birds. She eats bugs without making faces. She stays awake during the day and sleeps during the night. Slowly, as she disowns these aspects of herself (which is fragmentation), her loneliness grows. Her lack of belonging, which is actually the result of her denying her own nature, makes it so that she feels desperate for approval and she senses something is wrong with her. She feels alone even when she is near the birds.

Eventually, when she is completely lost, she encounters the very bat tribe that she was separated from before she wound up in the bird's nest. They make her aware of her bat nature. She is encouraged to re-own that fragmented and suppressed aspect of herself. And as a result, she no longer feels alone. She realizes that she can have both her connection to the birds and be connected to her true nature, which is a bat nature.

We relate to stories like this one because we all go through the process of denying our true nature, thus fragmenting ourselves in response to the

experiences we go through in our external world. We especially do this when we encounter the approval and disapproval of people who we so badly want to be loved by.

Ironically, the process of fragmentation is a process by which we become less and less authentic. We want to be loved, but the biggest barrier to being loved is inauthenticity. Just like Stellanor could not actually be loved or feel loved because she was no longer aware of her bat nature, when you are in a state of inauthenticity, whereby you are identifying with any one part of you to the exclusion of other parts of you, you can't even give that hidden part of yourself to anyone, therefore they cannot even have the opportunity to love it.

Ultimately, as you consider all these proposed techniques, the solution for how to deal with shame is in fact a paradigm shift. Instead of getting rid of it or fixing it away, we need to find ways to integrate the feeling of shame. You know now that whenever we feel shame in adulthood, it's due to being pushed into feeling shame by adults when we were children. These are traumatic wounds to our emotional body.

For this reason, when you feel shame there is a need to sink down into it, be unconditionally present with it, find your essence as a child in the memory where you were being shamed and then re-parent that wounded inner child. I wrote a book called *The Completion Process* and if you continue to struggle with shame, I highly suggest learning the process and applying it to the shame you feel.

Part III

The Pillar of Fear

*The voice of a child says
It's better that our hearts grow light.
It's better to embrace instead of exile suffering.
Mothers weep until their tears run dry.
Their sons on distant streets decay,
kissed by the meritless fever of war,
Stripped of life.
And all souls die along with them;
Just as all souls live
when a newborn embraces the joy of its mother's breast.
Relieved of the heavy husk of childhood
Let our voices rise to denounce
all that kept us prisoner.
Like the undisturbed stars
my heart flickers without falter.
I use its light to turn around to face my real enemies,
but all there is
is stillness and space...
Row upon row of ramparts I have built
for an enemy that doesn't exist.
All souls are set free
as I tear down my walls
brick by brick
But not by hating them.
I have taken the child's advice.
It's better that our hearts grow light.
It's better to love than to fear.
And the voice of a child says
there is no better way to love
than to love the fear itself.*

Fear by Teal Swan

The Pillar of Fear

The third pillar of loneliness is fear. So, what does *fear* have to do with loneliness and connection? The answer is that fear is inherently about separation. By its very nature, fear is to push something or someone away from you, and it is the number-one most isolating experience on the planet. The more fearful we are, the more alone we are. Fears about relationships or about other people simply serve to separate us from people and make us lonely when it comes to human contact.

To help visualize this, imagine that you are standing in the middle of a circle with a bunch of people. Now see yourself feeling fear toward these people in the circle and pushing them away. When you do this, eventually everyone else ends up outside the circle and you are the only one inside the circle... *alone*. Now imagine that same scenario but this time your fear toward everyone causes you to want to avoid them and thus run away from them. If you do this, everyone else is still inside the circle and you are now outside the circle... *alone*. This is how fear creates loneliness and prevents connection.

Earlier in this book, I explained that there is only one kind of pain in this universe, and that is the pain of separation. If we feel pain, it's because in that moment, we are separated from something. And when we feel pain in a relationship, it's always an indication that we have a fear present. We need to face that fear directly. People who are lonely are deeply fearful people. The fear they feel is the felt experience of pushing something away.

Hell is not a state that exists external to us. Hell is *fear*. Fear and hell are one and the same. This is why there can be people who are in hell walking the Earth next to people who are in heaven. Heaven is *love*. Vibrationally speaking, love is the opposite of fear.

It's important that we come to recognize what all our fears are about, especially our core fear. Our core fear is the thing we try the hardest to avoid in life. As such, our core fear will always be a part of ourselves that we split off from and disowned. This means that you have yet another Inner Twin, a Fear Twin, inside you that came about because of your core fear. You may have any number of Fear Twins in fact.

Facing our deepest inner fears

Here is a recent experience I had of uncovering deep fears in my own life. When I moved to a foreign country for the first time, I committed to a period of shamanic journey work with plant medicines. On one of my inner journeys, I was forced to witness my deepest fears one by one, down to the very core fear that I have. That is the fear of being trapped in pain, alone with no escape and no way of ending it. This is my greatest fear because it's already something I have experienced in my real life.

The desperate fear I felt from that experience in my life made me cut off from the part of myself that was having that terrifying experience. It became an Inner Twin and it lay subconscious within me for many years.

When I finally became aware of this long-lost part within me, this Fear Twin, in my mind's eye, looked completely burnt from head to toe. Only her eyes were distinguishable. Her right shin bone was compound fractured. She couldn't move or breathe because she was in so much pain. She looked like the kind of person who had been hurt so badly that she needed to be in the Intensive Care Unit.

During that inner journey, I was told that the two greatest answers to overcoming fear were to love the self *that is afraid* and to love the self that you are *the most afraid of*. If to love means to take something as a part of yourself, to love it in this case meant that I had to re-own it and, as such, to take responsibility for its wellbeing. Therefore, I had to decide to make this part of myself, my Fear Self, my first priority.

In other words, I had to figure out what she needed and begin to change my life to make space for those needs. Thus I entered a period of healing. I cancelled my upcoming tours. I invited my Fear Twin to come up within me to take over my body so I could really feel her needs. Following her needs, I would sleep-in in the morning. I took Epsom salt baths and I practised tenderness with myself. I made sure that everyone in my life who mattered to me was aware of this inner part of me and asked them to be in a relationship with her as well. I asked people to treat me gently. As this fragile Inner Twin began to heal, I grew less and less afraid of people. I began to feel ready for life again.

Then I did the same with any other aspects of myself that were afraid and had splintered off over the years. This was the beginning of taking responsibility for my fears. Instead of seeing my fears as things that were trying to destroy my life and pull me down, I saw that they were like terrified children crying out desperately for my help. And when I answered that call, I felt less afraid and I felt less alone.

The inheritance of fear

THE INHERITANCE OF FEAR

Even if we grow up in a loving environment, we inherit fear and the belief that we are not able to deal with certain things.

Hardly any mother on Earth can avoid saying, “Be careful or you’ll get hurt.” When a child hits the toddler phase, mothers often say this many times a day. Inherent in her voice is the message, “The world is dangerous and you won’t be able to handle it if something bad happens.”

This message is a distortion because it really isn’t about *the child* not being able to handle it, it’s about *the mother* not being able to handle it. When she tells her child to be careful, what she is really saying is, “If something bad happens to you, I won’t be able to handle it.” When we were children we took on our mothers’ fear, whether we were aware of it or not.

The same is true of our fathers and any other significant people in our early environment. We adopted their feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy without questioning it, and we adopted the inevitable fear that came as a result of it. And as we will explore more in this section, the primary ways that we usually cover up our fears are through *avoidance* and *control*.

Remember, there are only two movements that we usually take: the movement *toward* and the movement *away*. When you experience fear, you naturally push something away from yourself, which is to say that you *dis-include* it as part of yourself. This is the opposite of love, which is to pull something toward yourself so as to *include* it as part of yourself.

Fear can be defined as a response to a perceived threat. When we perceive something to be a danger to us, meaning that we perceive the possibility of suffering, harm, or injury on a physical, mental or emotional level, then of course we naturally want to get away from it. Usually we want to either push it away, which would be fighting it, or we want to run away from it, but there is a third choice. We could choose to *reform it* so it’s no longer a threat. We can *reform it* by changing it into something that no longer threatens us.

Interestingly, it doesn’t matter whether the threat is really a threat to us or not. What matters is if we *perceive* it to be a threat. Fear is something that is primal, in the same way as shame. Each of these are a *reaction* that happens instinctively without us having to think about making it happen. Our reaction is a visceral and organic biological affective reaction. It begins as a reaction and then thoughts come in on top of that reaction.

If we feel fear, we think we are unsafe. We don’t feel secure from danger, harm, injury or risk. Unless we feel safe in a given situation or with a given person, we will naturally push that situation or that person away from us. This behaviour is a mirror of what we do to the part of ourselves internally that caused us to feel afraid in the past – we push it away.

caused us to feel afraid in the past – we push it away.

For example, if part of us is angry and we have learned that anger causes us to be rejected by others then we won't feel safe to include anger as part of ourselves or even acknowledge that it is within us. Other people might say, "There's nothing wrong with anger," but if your past experience has taught you that there is something wrong with anger and it comes with big consequences, you'll perceive anger as a threat and you will therefore continue to fear it.

The fears we hide inside primarily arose because we lacked safety in our childhood or lost our personal security too early. As adults, we still long for someone to protect and provide for us, unaware that we have other options to feel safe. We carry the remembered imprint of the small child within us, who was surrounded by indifferent, un-attuned or hostile giants, otherwise known as the adults in our lives, and that child inside us decided that safety was impossible. If we experience a lot of fear relative to relationships, chances are that this early experience was our reality. We just don't believe that it's possible to feel safe in the context of connection with other people, which torments us because connection is also something that we so desperately crave.

The four primary fears in relationships

People have four primary fears when it comes to relationships. They are:

1. Abandonment
2. Rejection or disapproval
3. Being trapped in pain
4. Loss of self, also called enmeshment

Abandonment is an *exiting violation* and leads to isolation. When we are abandoned or perceive abandonment, we feel we have lost connection with someone because they went away.

When we feel rejected or disapproved of, we perceive ourselves to be pushed away by someone. This causes acute pain within us.

Sometimes we feel that because of certain circumstances or even perhaps due to our own needs, we won't be able to get away from someone who is hurting us mentally, emotionally or physically. When this is the case, we are trapped in pain. This is the essence of torture.

Loss of self or enmeshment is when we feel completely consumed by our partner rather than the kind of connection and unity we crave, which is to become part of each other. Enmeshment is definitely not mutually positive, which is why we are so scared of it. It's when one person becomes part of the other but not the other way around, so it actually feels more like being eaten.

There are two sides to the fundamental core of fear. The first is that you feel powerless to prevent *what is unwanted* and the second is that you feel powerless to bring about *what is wanted*. If you dissect any fear you have, you will always find these two sides within it.

You'll notice also that desire is always present if fear is present. Most of us don't recognize that. If you feel powerless to bring about what you desire in your reality, it means that despite having a strong desire, it is your thoughts, words and actions that are pulling in the opposite direction of what you desire. In other words, there is a separation between you and what you desire.

On a physical level, this rather energetic circumstance shows up in your embodiment as the feeling of fear. It feels like life is happening *to* you. That wouldn't be a problem if you felt like you could handle what was happening *to* you. But the thing about fear is that if you are feeling fear, without exception it means that you feel like you can't handle whatever life is bringing to you or whatever is happening to you at that moment. For example, if I feel fear about making a fool out of myself, I can't handle the experience of being embarrassed and I don't feel able to face the potential consequences of being seen as foolish or silly by others.

It's impossible to fear the unknown

One of the biggest fears is "the unknown". This is because, as humans, we have become addicted to knowledge. We just have to know everything about everything at all times. It's part of why you picked up this book to read.

There are several dynamics that make knowing things appealing and one is that when we grasp a new concept, our brain releases a dose of chemicals similar to opium. Knowledge addiction also gives the human being a strong evolutionary advantage. We are guaranteed to progress if we are hard-wired to learn. Without thinking about it, we tend to want to pick out experiences that are new because those experiences will cause us to learn more, thereby quenching our thirst.

This desire for knowledge is not in and of itself negative, but it has a shadow side. The shadow side is that knowledge is often used by the human ego as a security blanket. Let me explain. The ego uses knowledge to avoid things it fears things like insignificance, worthlessness and physical pain. The ego knows

reals, things like insignificance, weakness and physical pain. The ego knows that we become significant to others when we know more than them and we gain status and respect from others. And knowledge is often used by the ego to keep itself away from the rocky seas of uncertainty. Cognitive closure provides more certainty to us and makes us feel safe. And if the ego's goal is survival, knowledge is more essential than even food or water is. After all, knowledge is what allows us to find food and water in the first place.

However, this commonly accepted idea that *we fear the unknown* is actually completely and totally false. We don't fear the unknown. If we truly feared the unknown, babies would fear everything and they don't. What we fear is what we *project into the unknown* based on our previous experiences. When we face something unknown, our mind goes to work projecting the fears that it has already acquired in an effort to predict what terrors lie in the unknown and then the ego goes to work trying to figure out how to avoid those fears. So you can see, it's actually those *projections* that we are afraid of.

For example, if we quit our job that we have been working at for ten years to do something radically new and different, we are venturing into the unknown. But we don't fear that unknown *in and of itself*. We fear the potential failure and fall from grace that we could experience socially by venturing into the unknown. This fear arises because we have experienced the feeling of failure or fall from grace before and wish to avoid that again at all costs. If we learned to not project our fears into the unknown, the unknown would no longer be scary.

Most of us fear not knowing because we fear that, as a result of not knowing, we will end up going through a "bad" experience, that we will experience whatever it is that we fear. However, your worry will greatly be reduced when you train your focus to see that *value is contained* in every single experience.

Begin to shift your thinking so that you can *accept* that you cannot know everything about everything. Expecting yourself to know everything about everything is cruelty, and usually the result of being in a state of fear relative to the world and life itself. Instead adopt the philosophy that life is based upon exploration, expansion, adventure and the progression of discovery and learning.

There is a Zen master who once said, "The barn is burnt down. Now I can see the moon." Inherent in that statement is the idea that even the things that we would identify as a tragedy contain value. If we make it a habit to see value in all experiences in our lives, we don't spend so much time and effort trying to avoid certain experiences. That in and of itself is *liberation*.

The greatest avoidance strategies of all

Most self-help experts, psychologists and spiritual teachers approach the issue of

fear by telling you why you should not be afraid and how to avoid fear itself. There are several movements with lots of advice about how to control your reality, such as “your mind creates your reality” and the “law of attraction”. Since fear is about feeling powerless to avoid something unwanted, it’s obvious that if you control your reality, you’ll have nothing to fear.

Regardless of whether or not these philosophies are correct about how the universe operates (and some of them are), this is the wrong way to deal with fear. It’s comforting to accept that if we have control over our mind, we can have control over what is happening to us. It’s comforting to believe that we control our realities. But the problem is that when we use these philosophies, what we are doing is coping by avoiding and pushing away our fear.

The truth is that coping through avoidance never gets you anywhere. It means we are just resisting the thing we are avoiding. We are pushing it away. In a universe like the one that we live in, which functions like a mirror, anything you resist, you get more of.

Another popular belief system is *positive focus*. It encourages you to stay positive at all times and that will solve all your problems. But it doesn’t work. The vast majority of fears are about past trauma that we have experienced. When we experience something traumatic on an emotional level, it works the same way as it does with physical trauma.

There is an enormous difference between focusing on something positive for the sake of positive focus and focusing on something positive with the hope of trying to escape from, ignore or get away from something negative. My advice is to stop trying to *stop fear* and instead become better at knowing how to *care-take fear*.

Here’s an example to help you understand the danger of using positive focus to escape from fear. If you are in a bad car accident and experience a compound fracture to your leg, no amount of positive focus is going to heal you. If you don’t go to the hospital or a doctor, and instead attempt to distract yourself from the fracture by thinking positive thoughts, you are only avoiding the reality that you have a serious medical issue that needs conscious medical intervention. What is the result if you try to escape from, ignore or get away from a broken bone like this? *It festers*. You become incapacitated if you survive the infection at all. In short, when we try to avoid something, the thing we are trying to avoid gets worse. And this includes fear.

This is the exact scenario we face on an emotional level. If we suffered an emotional trauma and we ignore, suppress or deny it in favour of *positive focus*, we are using positivity to get away from *negativity*. The emotional wound does not get better; it just festers. In short, positive focus is an amazing technique but

there is one enormous exception. Positive focus works on everything except for the things you're trying to use positive focus *to avoid*. Positive focus cannot and should not be used as a tool to enable our resistance.

A better strategy to deal with fear

When it comes to fears and the feeling that we are powerless to what happens in our reality, the discussion doesn't need to be about how we *create our reality*, *how to control our reality* or *how to stop feeling* fear. The focus needs to be on developing trust in your ability to handle whatever happens. If we believed that we could handle anything that came our way, fear would not occur within our being except when the basic fight-or-flight instinct kicks in if our life is threatened. If we believe we can handle what comes our way, we would no longer be scared about day-to-day activities or relationships, and fear would no longer limit us or close us down to enjoying life.

If we experienced many situations as children where we couldn't handle what life threw at us, we ended up with a *learned helplessness* that led to constant anxiety. It's as if that feeling of being a child who was powerless to take care of itself imprints on our being. We develop learned powerlessness that doesn't change even when we become adults who are capable of handling those situations.

One of the most popular metaphors used in the world to demonstrate *learned powerlessness* is that of elephants. If you tie an elephant to a tree as a baby, when he is too small to move the tree, he will grow up believing that he cannot escape the tree and won't even try when he's an adult animal and he could easily uproot the tree entirely. This is how it works with the ingrained feeling that we cannot handle what life brings us.

It's at this point that we can clearly see a powerful way that fear braids itself in with shame. If we feel that we are powerless to deal with something, we feel ashamed that we can't deal with that thing. In that moment, we are not feeling good about ourselves because we are seeing ourselves as incapable. This is especially true if it seems to us like other people *can* deal with that same thing. We decide that not being able to handle something means that something is innately wrong with us or bad about us. For this reason, when you feel fear, consider that what it means is that right here and now, you are *feeling bad about yourself*.

As we did with shame, it's important that we go back to the original experiences that caused us to believe we couldn't handle what life brings us and caused us fear in the first place, and then find a way to resolve those original

experiences. Again, if this is an issue for you, I encourage you to read my book entitled *The Completion Process* because in it, I offer a process to do this. I cannot stress to you enough the power and potential of experiencing yourself positively handling situations that you could not handle in the past.

Since fear is about a situation where you don't trust that you can handle it, it's then obvious that your focus needs to switch from, "I can't handle that situation" to "How can I handle that situation?" Then imagine it happening just that way. Sometimes, this is all it takes to diminish the fear you have about something and reduce your feelings of learned powerlessness.

Choice

If we feel powerless, the implication is that we have no opportunity to make a personal choice. But choice immediately gets you out of a place of helplessness. Instead, you feel empowerment. The idea of power terrifies most people. It's frightening because people associate *power* with tyranny and manipulation, both things that cause suffering for others and thus both things that give *power* a bad rep in human society.

The thing is, genuine empowerment makes you less manipulative and less controlling of others. Genuine empowerment makes you free. It makes you open to the world instead of closed to it. Personal power therefore is a necessary part of love.

To begin the practice of increasing your personal power, adjust your focus in any situation that you face toward exploring what choices you have in that situation. In most cases, there will be a multitude of choices.

For example, say you were asked to give a public speech and you were petrified. You might even tell the person, "Oh no, I *can't* do that," when you really mean you *won't do* that. You can physically do it, so saying that you can't is not the truth. It's more accurate to say, "I don't choose to get up on stage and give a talk." You may have an array of very valid reasons why you made that choice, but the empowerment comes from realizing that the truth is you *choose not* to do it rather than believing that you *can't*.

Often, fear puts limits on us that don't inherently exist and we overuse the word "can't". We believe we can't do something that we want to do, when in fact we can. That being said it is important to know that all people have certain limits. For example, a paraplegic cannot walk up the stairs. So in a situation where someone literally can't do something, the empowerment is in the choice to embrace their limits and ask themselves, "What choices do I have now, having accepted this limit of mine?" Having limits is not wrong. We still have access to a vast array of choices even if we accept a limitation.

access to a vast array of choices even if we accept a limitation.

What it comes down to is, when we have to make a choice about our options or our actions, we need to be asking ourselves, “Is this option bringing me more power or less?” Recognizing choice brings your power back to you instead of leaving it in the hands of other people.

THE BIG QUESTION

Begin your process of transcending fear by accepting this statement: *fear will never go away*. You will never live a life without fear. There is no such thing as fearlessness. Even though we experience various degrees of fearfulness, as long as you are on this planet and you are growing and expanding as a person by taking new risks and following your desires, there will be fear. We may try to hide it from each other but that doesn't mean it isn't there.

Now ask yourself this big question: “How would my life be different and what might I do differently with my time and energy if I just accepted that I am in a lifelong relationship with fear?”

How thoughts become fears

Fear is the feeling that arises from any thought that takes you away from what you desire, therefore thoughts play a leading role when it comes to fear. Here is an example of a thought pulling you in the opposite direction of what you desire.

If you want a relationship that is committed and secure, you will want to be careful about thoughts like these examples. “No man can ever truly be committed, it goes against his biology.” “No woman could ever commit to me because she loves me, because all women care about is what I can do for them.” “There is a less than 50 per cent chance that any marriage will last, so it's a total crap shoot.” These kinds of thoughts will pull you away from what you want and induce fear.

Thoughts don't only come in the form of words in your head but also as images. For example in the previous scenario, I may not hear the words, “No man can ever truly be committed, it goes against his biology”, but I may simply see an image of a man walking out the door or cheating on me with another woman. Regardless of the form of the thought, when it's about fear it can be anything that goes against our desire.

What am I really afraid of?

The first step in overcoming fear is to become fully aware of the fear. Most of us become used to the discomfort of anxiety or fear without ever really putting in the effort to figure out what exactly we are afraid of. Our fears are a bit like ghosts that haunt us, but that we cannot clearly see. But a phantom only has complete control of you if you can't see it. Seeing it in fact instantly reduces its magnitude. We have to ask ourselves the question, "What am I really afraid of in this situation?"

To figure out what you're really afraid of, you must dive into the feeling of the fear instead of doing things to get away from it. This is easier said than done, but it will get easier with more and more practise.

Here is an example. The moment I feel fear, I can try to get rid of the fear, which would most often be to push it away. For example, if I get onto a plane and I start to feel fear, I can distract myself with video games. I can tell myself all the things that make the plane safe. I can tell myself that the fear is ridiculous and suppress it with my refusal to see my own fear as valid. But these tactics don't really work.

This is the better approach. The moment I start to feel fear, I can try to integrate the fear by inviting it to come closer. For example, I could close my eyes and focus all of my attention on the sensations of the fear itself as they occur in my body. I could watch the images popping up in my mind. I could listen to what the various inner voices are saying or showing me.

Then I could begin to dive deeper by compassionately questioning with a genuine desire to understand. I could ask myself: "What about this is so frightening?" When I get the answer, I might then ask, "Why is that so frightening? What does that remind me of that I have experienced before?" By inviting my fear closer to me in this way, I am not only exposing the fear so I can face it but, by doing so, I care-take it directly and become more conscious.

Whenever we have faced an actual fear, we have the power to use our minds and hearts to resolve the past traumatic experience that caused the fear. We can also make choices and strategize direct ways to make the situation safer for us.

Why exposure strategy doesn't work for fear

Once people are aware of what they are afraid of, a common strategy people often use to overcome the fear is *exposure therapy*. For example, a person who is deathly afraid of snakes is taken to a place where they have to hold snakes so that their anxiety eventually goes away by seeing that there is no real threat. In my opinion, if this form of therapy is done too prematurely it only serves to

reinforce an internal atmosphere of fear and unsafety.

Imagine that someone is considering *exposure therapy* but they have Inner Twins that don't agree. One Inner Twin wants to rush toward the fearful element to get over the fear, while at the same time the other Inner Twin wants to run away from it and be kept safe from it. What happens then is an internal tug of war erupts inside ourselves between those two aspects of us.

To expose ourselves to what we fear in this situation is to bulldoze a vulnerable part of ourselves, our Inner Twin that is not ready. That scared Inner Twin component of ourselves will only learn to distrust the other part because its best interests, free will and desires are not being considered. This creates an internal emotional atmosphere of distrust. The result is that we won't trust ourselves and we won't even know why that is. We won't realize it's because one of our Inner Twins played a zero-sum game (I win and you lose) with another Inner Twin. A zero-sum game is a situation where the end is always that in order for one person to win, the other has to be the loser.

The better, alternative approach to *exposure therapy* is that once we have discovered a fear, we can use our minds and hearts to resolve the fear. You can imagine this as the process of taking your attention off of the fear itself and turning your loving, attentive presence and focus toward your Inner Twin who wants to get as far away from whatever it's afraid of as possible.

Using this inner technique, we approach this aspect of our self as if it were a terrified, crying child. Instead of forcing it to do what scares it, we try to understand its fear and express that we see that fear as valid, and that the fear must be there for an important reason. We then sit with its fear and see how we can best offer the Inner Twin the reassurance and safety that it needs.

Often what happens when we do this is that we become very clear on a boundary. Either we become clear that what is right for us and what is needed in order to feel safe is to say a clear "no" to engaging with the thing that scares us. Or we may become clear that the side that is scared *also* wants to engage with the thing that scares it.

There is a big difference between hearing the Inner Twin say, "I am scared and I don't want to engage with this thing," as compared to them saying, "I am scared but I also want to engage with this thing." The only point at which *exposure therapy* is a good idea is the point at which the frightened Inner Twin says they are willing to engage with the thing they fear. If this is the case, our two Inner Twins are aligned, which creates an internal atmosphere of trust. The fear can then be met and it can be faced by the two Twins approaching it hand-in-hand, which will then remove the fear and reinstate inner harmony and trust.

However, just to be clear: if the fearful Inner Twin is not ready to face the

fear and sets up a firm boundary and they say “no” to the *exposure therapy*, then that must be respected and held firm to, in order for there to be an internal atmosphere of trust.

Emotional wake-up call

Body, mind and soul: this triad has long been considered the pillars of a complete life. But what if I told you that we got it wrong? When we think of *soul*, we think of an etheric or intangible energy. But then we also have the ethereal, intangible nature of feelings and emotions (which we don’t understand), and we very often relate them to our concept of *soul*. This is why advice about how to feed and heal your soul is designed to help you to emotionally feel better.

In truth, our *soul* aspect is innately healthy. It cannot be in an unhealthy state. *Soul*, which is pre-manifested energy, creates three important things: feelings, mind and body. Thus all three levels of a person are in fact comprised of *soul*. Our body is our soul projecting itself *physically*. Our mind is our soul projecting itself *mentally*. Feeling is our soul *consciously perceiving*.

Due to this reality, we can look at it one of two ways. The first is that the three pillars of health are body, mind and emotion. The second way is that emotion is the language of the soul. If you choose to see it these ways, then the key to what people are calling *soul health* is actually your *emotional health*. And an important aspect of emotional health is the conscious acknowledgement of our non-corporal consciousness, the non-physical side of our being, which we could call *spirit* or *soul*.

When we use the word soul, we are referring to the core aspect of a person’s being. In the English language, *soul* and *heart* are interchangeable concepts. This is why when someone is speaking from the core of their being, they may say, “I know it in my heart that *this or that* is true.” What this means is that deep down, we know that the very heart of our experience in life is not mental or physical, it’s feeling and emotion.

When we first come into this life, we experience the world entirely through *felt perception*. We feel the world before we see the world. Feeling and emotion are not only the heart of your life here on Earth, but these two crucial elements are also at the heart of your relationships. And because feeling and emotion are the heart of relationships, it’s also where the most damage is done.

It’s clear that the way we relate to feeling and emotion, and what we know about them, is grounded in our upbringing and socialization. We can say now, looking back over the last centuries of human existence, that our ideas about good and bad ways to raise a child have changed dramatically. For example, in

good and bad ways to raise a child have changed dramatically. For example, in medieval times childhood did not really exist. As soon as a child could physically manage it, they were put to work, often in roles that would be seen as slavery today. Children were not seen as pure but rather as evil and extraordinary corporal punishment was considered normal and commonplace. In that era, even in the most aristocratic households, instead of valuing and adoring their children, some parents took to despising their offspring and deliberately belittling and abusing them, misguidedly thinking it was for the children's own good.

In the late 1600s in the Western world, history saw the birth of the punishment-and-reward style of parenting. Instead of pure corporal punishment, philosopher John Locke suggested that the better way of training a child would be to withdraw approval and affection by “disgracing” the child when they were bad and “esteeming” them when they were good by rewarding the child with approval and affection.

In the early 20th century, not much had changed. Childrearing experts still formally denounced all romantic ideas about childhood and advocated formation of proper habits to discipline children. In fact, a 1914 US Children's Bureau pamphlet, *Infant Care*, urged a strict schedule and urged parents not to play with their babies. John B. Watson's *Behaviorism* argued that parents could train children by rewarding good behaviour and punishing bad behaviour, and by following precise schedules for food, sleep and other bodily functions.

Corporal punishment began to fall out of favour in the Western world in the late 20th century. Many parents became conscious enough to see corporal punishment for what it is – abuse. And so, today, while sadly there are still pockets of unconscious parents that still abuse their children in the name of discipline, the majority use parenting practices like timeouts as tools for discipline.

Creating a healthy emotional climate

It's easy to look back over time and say that we were living in the dark ages in terms of parenting. But I will tell you that in the years to come, that is exactly what history will say about today's style of parenting. History will see many of our common practices as barbaric and cruel. We now know how to create a healthy *physical* climate for our children and for each other. But I am here to tell you that we have no idea how to create a healthy *emotional* climate for our children or for each other.

While there are some rare exceptions to this rule, over the course of human history, even up to today, *the emotional climate* of a household has not even

factored into the idea of good parenting. But I believe we are starting to awaken to the realization that it is possible to be a good parent to a child on a physical level and a terrible parent to a child on an emotional level. This has vast implications when we acknowledge that emotion is the core of our life and the heart of our relationships.

In today's world, we fear emotions, such as fear itself. Most parenting advice ignores the world of emotion entirely. It focuses on how to correct misbehaviour while disregarding the feelings that underlie and cause the misbehaviour. Regardless of how far we have progressed, the goal of parenting is still to have a compliant and obedient child, not to raise a healthy adult. In other words, the goal is to raise a child who is "good". Good parenting involves emotion. Good relationships involve emotion.

Creating a healthier emotional climate in this world starts with how we treat our children and then these same standards need to extend to how we treat ourselves and how we relate to our friends and our loved ones.

Primarily, parents need to correct three crucial mistakes. And we as adults have to do so with each other as well. We don't need to blame parents or chastise anyone, because hardly anyone in today's world was raised with emotional security themselves, so hardly anyone knows what they could be doing better. But here in a nutshell are the three golden rules, the new rules for parenting and for us in our relationships, which will bring about a much healthier emotional climate in this world:

1. Parents need to stop *disapproving* of their children's emotions. And we need to stop disapproving of our own emotions and the emotions of those around us.
2. Parents need to stop *dismissing* their children's emotions. And we need to stop dismissing our own emotions and the emotions of those around us.
3. Parents need to offer guidance to a child with regard to their emotions. And we all need to understand *how emotions impact every aspect of our lives* so we can learn to cope better with emotions.

So here's how this looks within parenting. The parent who disapproves of their child's emotions is critical of their child's displays of negative emotion and reprimands or punishes the child for expressing their emotions. The parent who

dismisses their child's emotions disregards them as important, and they ignore their child's emotions or, worse yet, trivialize the child's emotions. And the parent, who offers no guidance, may empathize with their child's emotions, but does not set limits on behaviour or assist the child in understanding and coping with their emotions.

The devastating implications

To give you an example of how this plays out in practical terms: imagine that William doesn't want to go to school and begins to cry when his parents take him there. The parent who is disapproving might scold William for his refusal to cooperate and resort to calling him "a brat" or punishing him in some way with time alone or with a spanking.

The dismissive parent may brush off William's emotions by saying, "That's silly. There's no reason to be sad about going to school. Now turn that frown upside down." The dismissive parent may even resort to distracting William from his emotions by giving him a cookie or pointing out a cow in a field on their way to school.

The parent who offers no guidance may behave in an empathetic way toward William by telling him that it's OK to feel sad or scared but then continue to help William decide what to do with his uncomfortable feelings. Instead the parent would leave him in a space where he feels as if his emotions are an all-consuming force that he is powerless to deal with.

Let's consider the deep implications of parents not providing a healthy emotional climate. Children who are raised this way are not able to self-soothe and also tend to develop health problems. The child fails to emotionally connect with their family and often feel as if they don't belong. And very importantly, they fail to develop intimacy with their families and as a result, they feel isolated and alone.

This isolation and loneliness of course carries on into adulthood. They grow into adults who are incapable of managing their emotions and struggle to make relationships work. They suffer with an extreme fear of intimacy. They feel powerless and often develop co-dependent relationships.

Creating better adult relationships

Our parents did not teach us how to treat emotions in a healthy way, and so this is how we treat our own and others' feelings as adults. Our friendships and romantic relationships are painful because we don't know how to emotionally

relate with one another. We fail to develop true intimacy. We continue to dismiss and disapprove of our own and each other's feelings and so tell other people how they should and shouldn't feel and have no patience for the emotional needs of others around us. Most of us see emotions and feelings as weaknesses and we call people who display emotions *overly sensitive*. And as a result our adult relationships are emotionally unhealthy.

Here are just three examples of adult relationships that are emotionally dysfunctional but I'm sure you can come up with many more.

Regardless of whether it's a friendship or a romantic relationship, emotions and feelings are the heart of every healthy and meaningful relationship. Without a healthy emotional life, a relationship is not a relationship, it's merely a social arrangement. You simply cannot create an intimate connection with someone if you are not in touch with your emotions and feelings.

1. A woman goes to lunch with her friend. The woman is disappointed because she didn't get promoted at work, the way she thought she would. Her friend tells her she is just being negative and needs to look on the bright side. Her friend insists that all she is doing is creating more disappointment in her reality because she is so negatively focused.
2. A husband gets home late from work and his wife starts crying the minute he walks through the door. The husband sees her crying and immediately says, "You always overreact. I was only a half an hour late. Maybe you are just menopausal. You need professional help." He completely dismisses her and then withdraws to his office to watch television.
3. A man is facing divorce. He tells his friends about what is going on and they convince him to join them at the bar. When he shows up, none of them acknowledge that he is going through a difficult time emotionally. Instead they encourage him not to think about it, have a drink, watch the sports game and look at pretty girls at the bar.

Please be reminded here that intimacy is not about sex. Sex may be a by-product of intimacy, but it's not *intimacy* in and of itself. Intimacy is knowing and being known for who we really are in all aspects of our lives. It's the

bringing forth of the truth of who you are to the centre of the relationship and being received for who you are; and the other person doing the same. It's a meeting at the heart where empathy and understanding can then occur.

Intimacy can be broken down into three little, very important syllables: "into me see". Intimacy is to see into one another so as to deeply connect with one another and to know one another for who you truly are. And if the core of who you are is your feelings then the language of the soul is also feelings, thus creating the most important part of intimacy, which is emotional connection and understanding each other's feelings.

Emotions matter

The bottom line is: *emotions matter*. In order to have healthy, lasting relationships, we must see the importance of and the value in each other's feelings and show respect for each other's emotions. We must listen for the feelings behind the words. We must open ourselves up to being understood and open ourselves to understanding others.

You should always acknowledge that you understand someone's feelings and emotions before you proceed to give them advice. If instead you tell someone how they should or shouldn't feel, you are teaching them to distrust themselves. You are teaching them that there is something wrong with them.

We struggle the most with negative emotions so, the way we deal with negative emotions is a good indicator of the emotional health of our relationships. When we are dealing with negative emotions, there are steps we can take to address those emotions and develop an emotional connection with another person and so enhance our intimacy. This goes for our children as well as the adults in our lives.

The following rules are solid gold in a relationship when you are facing conflict. Once you learn and apply them, you will see your whole world improve. Here's what to do:

1. Become aware of the other person's emotional state.
2. Express care about the other person's emotion by acknowledging that it is valid and important.
3. Listen empathetically to the other person's emotion in an attempt to understand the way they feel. This allows them to feel safe being

vulnerable without fear of judgement. Seek to understand, instead of just agreeing.

4. Acknowledge and validate their feelings. This may include helping them find words to label their emotion. Notice that in this step we don't need to validate that the thoughts they have about their emotions are correct. Instead we need to let them know that it's a valid thing to feel the way that they feel. For example, if our friend says, "I feel useless," we don't validate them by saying, "You're right. You are useless." We could validate them by saying, "I can totally see how that would make you feel useless and I would feel the same way if I were you."
5. Allow the person to feel how they feel and to experience their emotion fully before moving toward any kind of improvement in the way they feel. In this step we need to give them the permission to dictate when they are ready to move up the vibrational scale and into a different emotion. We cannot impose on them our idea of when they should be ready or be able to feel differently. This is the step where we practise unconditional presence and love for someone. We are there as a support without trying to "fix" them. Do not be offended if they don't accept your support at this time. There is a benevolent power inherent in offering, which is love in and of itself, regardless of what someone does or does not do with it.
6. Only after their feelings have been validated, acknowledged and fully felt, help the other person to strategize ways to manage the reactions they might be having to their emotion. This is the step where you can assert a new way of looking at the situation that may improve the way the other person is feeling. This is where advice can be offered.

Apply the same relationship rules to yourself

If you wish to be emotionally healthy, you have to realize and accept that you are in a relationship with yourself, which is to say your own emotions must matter to you. This means you must acknowledge and validate your own emotions and not dismiss or disapprove of them. Therefore, the six steps I have outlined just above, you must apply to yourself. If you do this, you will learn to trust yourself.

Never be ashamed of how you feel. If you feel shame because of how you

feel, it means you have been judged by others and told that your feelings were wrong or bad. But the reality is you wouldn't be feeling them if there wasn't a very valid reason to be feeling them. Your feelings are valid. If you feel an emotion, there is a good reason that you are feeling that emotion. Don't let anyone tell you how you should or shouldn't feel.

Know that you deserve a relationship where your feelings matter. And the fastest way to get to that kind of relationship is to decide that your emotions *matter to you*. If you stop abandoning yourself when you are experiencing negative emotions, you will come to trust that you will always be there for yourself. You will feel a deep sense of inner peace arise within you.

Once you become aware of your boundaries, you can protect them. If you ever feel that you are about to violate your own boundaries, you'll know you should stop and change course before you go ahead. Having a good sense of boundaries is essential to self-trust. It's also essential to creating connection with other people.

Fear and worry

Fear and worry go hand-in-hand because fear is about the future. It's about something we don't want to have happen, something we are desperate to prevent. If we have experienced painful things in life, especially if we can look at our past and say it was mostly painful, we come to expect that pain will be our future experience as well. Naturally then, we're going to worry.

In today's world, everywhere we turn, we are bombarded with things to worry about and people who think we should worry about them. Turn on the news. The collective human belief is that danger is lurking around every turn. We are convinced that worrying keeps us, and the ones we love, away from pain. We think worry allows us to see potentially life-threatening or unpleasant things before they come, so we can prepare or prevent them. If we can't find a way to prevent dangerous things, our survival and basic human need for certainty is at risk. Thus we use worry to try to outsmart our adversary.

And if we struggle with fear, our adversary seems to be the *whole entire universe*. Here's why. As worriers, we believe that whoever or whatever does create our reality is the authority figure, and so we ascribe the personality traits we associate with our primary authority figure to the universe and expect the same kind of treatment from the universe. Since most of us who worry had an authority figure that believed in punishment, we come to expect the same kind of treatment from the universe as we got from our mother or father or from whoever our primary authority figure was. We expect the universe to *cause us*

pain.

So you can see that those of us who worry don't believe that we can create our own reality even if we desperately want to believe that we do. We also believe, down deep, that we are not good enough to deserve love, rewards or good things to happen. Instead we think that we deserve punishment.

On top of all this, those of us who feel like we cannot handle situations, *worry a lot*. In our minds, we think if we know what to expect that it won't hurt as bad. We focus on the impending fall and not on the fact that we could just get out danger now, before we get too close to the edge.

Here's what's really going on behind the scenes of this situation. We live in a vibrational universe, and the solution we are seeking, to get out of danger for example, is a different vibration than the problem we keep obsessing about. You cannot be focused on the problem and be a vibrational match to the solution at the same time because that is a *vibrational contradiction*.

This is why worrying never feels good. There just isn't a way for the solution to come to you when every thought in your mind is a worry. But if we consciously choose to switch our focus to finding a solution, then our mind and our energy naturally vibrate toward making a solution appear. We become a vibrational match for a solution to the problem or a resolution to the fearful situation.

But here's an important realization: we think worry keeps us safe, or at the very least lessens our pain. But as long as you are worrying, you are *not feeling safe* and you *are feeling pain*. So you will most likely spend your life never actually experiencing safety or enjoyment. Sit with that for a moment. Worrying in fact keeps you in loss. It keeps you in a reality where you and the ones you love are dead or injured. Reality is whatever the mind perceives, whatever your mind is focused on. It has already been scientifically proven that the mind does not know the difference between what you are *thinking about* and what is *actually happening*. So if you are focused on the worst-case scenario, the worst-case scenario is the only reality you can perceive. Even if the person you're worried about is alive and well, in your mind they are already injured and dead. You are making them dead or injured in your mind.

At this point, I'm going to present a radical idea. By worrying, we are living the fear and reality of something without it happening *physically*. Worry prevents us from seeing reality. It makes "now" not exist. The only thing that exists is a future that we can't deal with. And should what we are worried about now *not happen*, we will worry about something else. These simple exercises can go a long way when it comes to directly caretaking your worry.

HOW TO CARE-TAKE WORRY

You aren't going to release worry all at once, not after a lifetime of being convinced that *worry* is the only reason you're alive and those you love are alive. And not after a lifetime of convincing yourself that worrying about someone means loving someone, which, as we know now, it does not.

So here are some things you can do to care-take your worry:

1. Acknowledge and observe your anxious thoughts and feelings. Don't try to ignore, fight or control them the way you usually would. Instead, simply observe them as if from an outsider's perspective, without reacting or judging. This way you are not giving them your energy or attention, you are merely observing and acknowledging them.
2. Don't try to stop worrying. Don't resist your own worry by trying to tell yourself or force yourself to stop worrying. "Thought stopping" backfires because it forces you to pay extra attention to the very thought you want to avoid. As a side note, some of us who believe that our minds create reality are terrified that worrying about something will make that very thing happen. You don't need to worry about this. The universe arranges itself according to vibration. Vibrationally speaking, worrying doesn't make us a match to experiencing the thing we are worried about happening. Worrying simply makes us a match to experiencing circumstances that cause us *more* worry.
3. Stay focused on the present moment. When a worry pops into your mind, consciously ask yourself: "What is happening *right here right now*?" List off the sensations in the present moment such as how your body feels, the rhythm of your breathing, your ever-changing emotions and the thoughts that drift across your mind. If you find yourself getting stuck on a particular thought, bring your attention back to the present moment using the prompt above. As you keep doing this, you'll find that there is nothing wrong with the present moment. For example, you may be worrying about a *plane crash*, but right here and now you are sitting in a room. The atmosphere is calm. You can hear noises in the room. Nothing is happening. Most especially a plane crash is not happening right here and now.

WORRY JOURNAL

If you find yourself often overwhelmed with worry, start to keep a worry journal. This is a notebook where you can just write lists upon lists of all the things you're worried about or are terrified will happen. Writing them down gets them out of your head and you can put them on the shelf until you have time to deal with them.

When you keep your journal, designate a time of day (not before you go to bed or first thing in the morning) to make a list of everything that is worrying you. Allow yourself to vomit up all these worries onto the page. If you're a chronic worrier, you may need to do this at the same time each day so your mind is less anxious about *when* it gets to vent. Postpone worrying until the time you have set aside for the worry journal. If you absolutely can't stop fixating on something you're worrying about, write it down in the journal and put it aside for later until the appointed journaling time.

Postponing worrying in this way is effective because it breaks the habit of dwelling on worries in the present moment. There's no struggle to suppress the thought or judge it, you simply save it for later. As you develop this ability to postpone your anxious thoughts, you'll start to realize that you have more control over your worrying than you think.

When you have time, analyse your lists and sort out things you are worried about that you can do something about right now. We can call these *productive worry items*. If this is hard to do, then just pick one item each day to focus on, just one *productive worry item*. For example, you may have written down: "I am going on a trip, so I am worried about making plane and hotel reservations." This is a productive worry because you can take action now by going online to do the research and make the reservations.

As you get better at this, try to deal with as many of the *productive worry items* as you can. With each one, evaluate it, come up with concrete steps for dealing with it and then put the plan into action. This switches your thoughts from the problem to the solution. Once you have a plan and start doing something about the problem, you'll feel much less worried.

It's also important to ask yourself, "Is the problem something I'm

currently facing or is it an *imaginary what-if?*” If the problem is an *imaginary what-if*, can you do something about the problem that would make you feel better? This is a kind of vibrational game you’re playing, to come up with ways that will help you to release resistance to what you’re worried about and do what comes to mind to make yourself feel better.

Once all the *productive worry items* on your list are dealt with, you will be left with unproductive and unsolvable worries for which you can’t identify a corresponding action. For those ones, it’s important to realize that you’re not doing any good by worrying about them at all. It’s a dead end. In fact, now that you know about vibrational matching, you know that by thinking about them at all, you’re just lending your precious energy to creating more or bigger problems. This is your incentive to just let the unproductive worries go and focus on things you can change or control, which are the *productive worry items*.

PLAY THE MARTIAN GAME

Many of us become isolated because we tend to be overly worried about what other people think of us. You can’t worry what they think of you when you’re thinking about them instead. So play a little game I call the Martian Game. Focus all of your attention on understanding the other person or the group you’re so worried about. Think of them or observe them like an alien observer, not a vulnerable peer. Write a list or make a mental list of your observations. This takes you out of worry mode.

It’s fun to pretend you’re a Martian gathering data on humans. As you notice what they do and say without focusing on your fears about their opinions, you’ll feel far less self-conscious, and they’ll feel the non-judgemental attention they’ve always wanted from you. It’s a win-win proposition.

ZOOM OUT

Zooming out is a way to ground yourself into what is really worth worrying

about. When you worry, it's not often about something *big* in the scheme of things. So when I say "zoom out", I mean think about something much bigger than what you're currently worried about. For example, you may be worried that your mid-term assignment won't be done on time or that you might get fired.

Instead of focusing on something like that, zoom out and look at a *bigger* problem within the world such as problems faced by people in under-developed or war-torn countries. People there may be starving and their children dying in front of their eyes. Or people there might be refugees trying to escape from persecution.

When your mind is thinking about bigger issues, you'll stop worrying about whether you have all the place settings you need for tonight's party. This technique will help to ground you in reality very quickly. Another way you can change your focus is to think about experiences you've had where the potential outcomes were much, much worse than what you are currently thinking about. It's difficult to worry about trivial things or even *imaginary what-ifs* when you remember being in a much tougher situation, which you obviously survived.

DEATHBED

Yet another technique is to stop when you are worrying about something and to imagine yourself on your deathbed. See what matters to you once you are there. Then think about whatever you were worrying about and ask yourself, "Do I care about this or do I consider this a significant worry to have had when I am on my deathbed?"

Why we seem to always expect the worst

The feeling of looking forward to things is one of the best feelings we experience in life. It makes us feel like we are excited to be here. It makes us trust that our future holds good-feeling things for us. We feel that we are headed toward the light and our desires are meant to be ours. But what about those of us who don't or can't seem to feel this way?

For a great many of us, instead of looking forward to things, we *expect the*

worst. This makes us distrust and fear our future. It makes us feel like we are destined to suffer and that the future holds tragedy for us. Instead of heading into the light, it feels like we are walking around a blind curve and into potential indescribable darkness. For many of us, it feels like our desires are not meant to be ours.

Preparing for the worst is a coping mechanism that most of us were taught as children. It's a survival strategy for those of us who were raised by people who believed that we don't create our own reality and life is a tragedy waiting to happen. Preparing for the worst becomes a survival mechanism for those of us who have been hurt and especially for those of us who have been hurt over again and over again.

The most painful part about expecting the worst is the feeling of *grieving* for things before they have even happened. We miss people before they are even gone. We feel disappointment before we have been let down. We feel the crushing weight of the loss of people we love, even when they are alive and well and actively part of our lives.

So how did this all begin? It is most likely due to a trauma or tragic situation, which impacted us deeply. We may still resonate and think about it or we may have stuffed it deep down into our subconscious. Either way, that earlier tragedy makes us a vibrational match to future tragedy without us even knowing it. We are a match to tragedy because we have not let ourselves grieve the loss of the connection that we suffered in that original event.

The solution is that we need to stop suppressing the feeling of worry. We need to allow ourselves to grieve for the original tragedy that we experienced in our lives. To do this, we need to allow ourselves to feel our feelings and fully experience them. The more willing we are to feel, the less resistant we become to negative past experiences and the less we worry about them happening or try to prevent them from happening.

We need to acknowledge that part of what is so scary is that we don't know what is going to happen. This is terrible on the one hand because it means that bad things could happen. But we can use this uncertainty to our advantage by the simple acknowledgement that good things could happen too.

If we can acknowledge that we don't actually know what is going to happen, we cannot say that we know 100 per cent beyond a shadow of a doubt that something bad will happen. Just this simple acknowledgement can release our conviction that *something bad* is inevitable and thus change the way we feel, which raises our vibrational frequency.

Another strategy is to reflect back on times when you thought that a worst-case scenario would happen, and it didn't. Maybe you were convinced that a

loved one who was hit by a car would die or slip into a coma, but they didn't. They made a full recovery. Make a note of these times so your mind begins to see that chronic worry is not always accurate.

DESIGN YOUR DAY YOUR WAY

One of the best ways to control your level of fear and worry is to begin to design each day around things to look forward to that you *can* control. Your day belongs to you. If you fear the future because you expect the worst, begin to place good things in your future by planning things that feel good to you and doing them throughout the day. Think of this like placing gold coins in your future and collecting them.

Start small. If we really expect tragedy to strike and expect disappointment, we will tend to feel as though the bigger the thing is or the more we want it, the more likely it is to fall through. So start with things you would enjoy and are most likely to happen.

For example, I may believe that a vacation with friends will fall through and end in disappointment, but a lunch meeting with them will probably happen. So I can plan an enjoyable lunch meeting for today.

Then get in the habit of actually actively planning and scheduling lots of little things that you can look forward to each day. These could be things like watching a movie, eating a treat, going for a walk, sitting on the beach or going swimming, or visiting with someone. The more comfortable you get with expecting things to pan out and go well, the easier it will be to plan bigger things to look forward to and the less you'll fear catastrophe.

This is a great strategy for improving your life because you are making deliberate choices. It's your choice to wake up and play music that soothes you. It's your choice to go for a morning run. It's your choice to make a breakfast that will set you up to feel good throughout the day. It's your choice to select an outfit that feels great to wear.

When you focus on the multitude of choices at your disposal, it will be much easier to look forward to your day-to-day life because you cannot have choice in your life and be powerless in your life at the same time. Choice is the opposite of powerlessness.

TAKE LOVING RESPONSIBILITY OF FEAR

At the end of the day, your personal safety and wellbeing should be of paramount importance. You know now that you can control many things in your life and you can always make choices that make you feel better rather than feeling worse.

However, if you do find that you still struggle sometimes with feeling safe, create a list of things that can help you to feel safe. To get you started, here is a small list of the things that could potentially make you feel safe:

- Being enclosed in a cocoon (under blankets)
- Being held
- Warm water to sit in
- A hot-water bottle to hold
- Talking to the part of you that is feeling super unsafe
- The smell of apricot and chamomile and baking bread
- Hot tea
- Listening to your soothing sounds playlist
- Watching a comedy movie or a stand-up comedian
- The colour blue
- Cooking
- Guided meditation to feel safe and relax the body
- Writing down things you are grateful for
- Getting reassurance or being comforted by others
- Making a list of ways you ARE safe in the current moment or relative to whatever you feel unsafe about
- Lying down outside in the sunshine
- Mentally going to your safe place in the snow

When you feel unsafe, go to your list and pick something to do, giving it your full focus.

You can also make decisions in your life that make you feel safer. For example, if you feel that going to a specific party makes you feel really unsafe, you can decide not to go to it or you can go with someone who makes you feel safer.

Another good technique to increase your positive vibration and deal

Another good technique to increase your positive vibration and deal with fear is deep breathing into your diaphragm and belly. Inhale for a count of four... hold the breath in for a count of two... exhale gently counting out for eight... and finish by holding the breath out for a count of two. Keep your breathing even and smooth throughout, and make sure the exhale is longer than the inhale.

Reclaim your unity and connection

When it comes to life and relationships, there will be so many times that we find we are compelled not to move forward because we are fearful. In these kinds of situations, action must come *before* the feeling of fear dissipates. All too often, people take no action until the fear goes away. But life cannot be lived like that. It cannot be lived like that anymore than it can be lived in spite of fear.

People who spend their life avoiding the feeling of fear never really live. They wander through life in a routine and familiar way only to arrive at death... *safely*. People who live their life in fear don't listen to the important messages encoded in their fear. They ignore limits and warning signs and don't care-take themselves. This ultimately leads to suffering and collapse. Our life depends on our capacity to lovingly take responsibility for our fear.

Trying to conquer or get rid of fear is nothing more than trying to separate yourself from separation itself. Remember: the opposite of fear is love. Any love you can have toward anything diminishes your fear, but the ultimate answer to fear is to love the self within you that is afraid and love the self within you *that you are the most afraid of*. It's by embracing fear itself that we dissolve fear. It's by embracing fear itself that we reclaim our unity and our connection.

Part IV

Creating Connection

*Here
The space between skin and skin
is torment.
But here
The space between souls
makes the space between skin and skin
a comfort.
The truth is hidden
and yet its whisper reaches us.
In the sweet luxury of a smile
In the brief consumption of embrace
It tells you to look deeper...
To look deeper.
Look beyond the space between us all and see
that you are that smile.
You are that embrace.
You are the civilian
whose life was lost to hatred.
You are the man
who strapped a bomb
to your own body,
and in the name of hatred,
took those lives.
You are the earth
that held them both
and converted their bodies
into new life.
Your pain is a congress of tears
called the ocean.
Your joy is a collation of light
called the sun.
The whisper of truth
tells you to look deeper...
To look deeper.
Until the truth is revealed
that there is no space
between skin and skin.
That there is no space
between souls.*

Connection by Teal Swan

Creating Connection

In the first part of this book, you became acquainted with the three pillars of loneliness, which are separation, shame and fear. You were then shown some strategies for how to topple these pillars. When the pillars of loneliness are toppled, there is only one thing to do: replace them with connection.

Connection can be thought of as perceiving a *link* or association between yourself and another thing. But in a state of oneness, you cannot be *connected* any more than you can be *disconnected* because you *are* everything else and everything else is you. In other words, in a state of oneness, there is no need for connection.

Oneness is the ultimate truth of this universe and yet here we are in the physical dimension living our *separate* physical lives. Most of us cannot perceive oneness. Some of us catch a glimpse of it only now and then. And so, connection is the closest that we come to that delicious state of ecstasy where no lack or distance or separation exists.

But when it comes to making a genuine connection with someone else, that link is consciously chosen and wanted by both people who are deciding to be linked together. Our connection can exist at any level of our being. We can be mentally, emotionally, energetically or physically linked. When we disconnect, we break that link on whatever level we disconnect, if not on all levels. Genuine connection is a link to someone that is consciously chosen, *not forced upon us*, so we have to focus on choosing to create it as well as on keeping it. Thus this section is about creating that permanent and lasting connection.

The primary ingredient for connection is intimacy

When most people hear the word intimacy, they think of sex. Obviously, if we think of intimacy only this way, it makes us feel threatened when we think of the notion of having intimacy with a friend, colleague, sibling or parent. But it's important to understand that intimacy is not about sex.

Of course we know that sex may be a by-product of intimacy in certain circumstances, but it's *not intimacy* in and of itself. Intimacy is about knowing yourself and being known by others for who you really are in all aspects of your life, and as such intimacy is the primary ingredient of connection. Intimacy is

what brings forth of the truth about who you are so you can be received while, at the same time, the other person brings forth the truth of who they are and is received for that. Intimacy is a meeting at the heart centre, where empathy and understanding occur.

Intimacy is to see into each another so as to deeply connect with the other person, and intimacy includes seeing into, feeling into, listening into, perceiving and understanding each other. To have genuine intimacy with someone, we have to be willing to commit to becoming an expert on them.

We cannot deny that intimacy is scary for most of us. It's scary because in this day and age, almost no one knows how to create and maintain a healthy, loving relationship. Because of this, when we have trusted people with ourselves before in our lives, too many of us have been hurt, betrayed, rejected, punished or ignored. We learn that there is no way to have other people and to have ourselves too.

However, when we make a genuine connection, we can have autonomy and maintain a healthy sense of self at the same time that we depend on someone and let ourselves really coalesce with another person's heart, mind and body. In genuine connection, we don't lose ourselves when we connect with someone and we can connect deeply enough that our sense of isolation is gone.

If we suffer from feeling like we will lose ourselves by being connected to people, we will constantly push them away when we feel closeness. If we worry that we will be abandoned when we are connected to people, we will constantly cling to them and test the strength of the connection. As a result our relationships become painful and we never have a healthy sense of connection.

When we enter into a relationship of any kind, we do so with all our own pain. We enter into relationships with other people who also experienced pain in their past relationships and thus bring that pain into this one as well. We both do what we learned to do, which is to protect our inner worlds and keep them hidden to avoid further damage. This might seem on the outside to be all well and good except for one thing: this leaves the majority of us unseen, unfelt, unheard, misunderstood and miserably lonely.

The avoidance of intimacy

Some people are absolutely terrified of intimacy. As a result, they avoid it, often without even realizing that they are doing so. They are terrified that intimacy is going to lead to something that feels bad. For example, we might be terrified that if we let someone really see the truth of us, they won't tolerate or accept it. If they know the truth of us, they may use it as leverage to control us or use it against us later. If they know our weaknesses or vulnerabilities, they can

against us later. If they know our weaknesses or vulnerabilities, they can capitalize on them to our detriment and conversely for their own best interest.

If they give us closeness, we may feel like we are obligated to make them happy in return, which is a kind of indebtedness and we stand to lose our freedom as a result. If they find out things about us that they might judge as bad or wrong, then they might increase our shame, abandon us or reject us. If we let them in, they might find a way to engulf us completely so that we don't even have ourselves at all and, worse yet, if they leave we will be left with nothing.

Here's another way to approach this. I suggest spending some time imagining being completely close to someone and having no distance between the two of you. Imagine that person being able to see, feel, hear, understand you and be permanently linked to you. At first you may feel a very deep imprint of fear arise when you try to imagine this and there is a good reason for that. It's based on a childhood response where we were told that our feelings, thoughts and desires would not be tolerated. This section will help you start to understand and overcome this fear, but first it's necessary to understand where it came from.

When a child is born, it's born with a natural compulsion and instinct to be *close* to its parents. Intimacy comes naturally to us all. Being close to our parents is how we guarantee having our needs met and experiencing protection and comfort in times of distress. But how a parent responded to you dictated how safe closeness and intimacy was or wasn't. If we have a fear of intimacy, our parents either dismissed our neediness and shamed us for it or used it against us.

As we have already discussed, in households like this, parents usually respond to feelings, thoughts or desires with intolerance and non-acceptance. The message that the child most often gets from this experience is that the way he or she feels, thinks or wants is invalid, shameful and in direct conflict with the parent's feelings, thoughts and desires. As for us, since we were only children when this happened, instead of seeing how ridiculous this was, we decided that our parent must be right.

The result was that they swallowed our own personal truth in the same way that a predator swallows its prey. And we let it happen. It was a strategy to keep us safe from conflict and avoid being abandoned. But nonetheless we felt engulfed. We lost ourselves.

In essence, then, our heart was broken long ago and never healed because we never found a way to resolve that pain and have a different experience relative to being seen, felt, heard and understood. We have no frame of reference as to what it feels like to have someone who can meet our needs in a consistently loving and warm way. Instead, we simply forged forward with a broken heart and, as a result of not even knowing what we needed in order to mend that heart, we entered into scenarios where we experienced more heartbreak. It does explain a

entered into scenarios where we experienced more heartbreak. It does explain a lot.

Closeness inevitably involves feelings of vulnerability because the person who fears intimacy has learned to cope with their own feelings with avoidance. This naturally leads to suppressing needs, feelings and desires, as well as avoiding anything that would induce these feelings. Thus, closeness is to be avoided at all costs, even though closeness is our most suppressed need.

And, unfortunately, we cannot dismiss our own needs, feelings and desires without doing the same to other people. We don't want to see, feel or deeply understand someone because that would bring up deep feelings of unfairness that we must accept, tolerate and take care of someone else is but that we won't receive the same treatment in return ... *just like in childhood*.

If you struggle with intimacy, realize that you have a tendency to repeat what was done to you as a child in your relationships. Recognize the way you meet other people's wants, needs, feelings, thoughts and desires is with intolerance. If you can remember how painful that was, you can recognize what you needed instead and provide that experience to other people. Imagine that every time you are giving that to them, you are giving that to the child in you that had to suffer in that way and helping to create a world where that kind of pain no longer exists.

Intimacy is a brand-new thing

If you are afraid of intimacy or struggle with connection, one of the best ways to proceed is to first accept that you will be learning how to be intimate, close and connected with someone for the first time from scratch. Start by admitting that you have no idea how to have a good relationship and prioritize learning it from the ground up now.

The truth is that you didn't have role models for a good relationship, so how could you know how to do it? You don't. Become OK with starting again and throwing your old paradigms away. This is similar to the moment that a scientist realizes his current theory is rubbish and he has to crumple it up and throw it in the trashcan. We have to be willing to do this and be open to entirely new ways of having a relationship.

If you fear intimacy, you need to discover the parts of you, your Inner Twins, who don't want to be intimate with someone. These are the inner parts of you that were wounded by your parents when they refused to accept and tolerate your feelings, thoughts and desires. You also need to face the inner parts of yourself that you created in order to protect those hurt parts.

Once you find these parts, talk to them, understand them, feel them, see them

and give them the intimacy that they didn't receive when you were a child. From this space, those inner parts of you will tell you what you need to do and what they need other people to do in order for them to allow for intimacy and closeness to happen.

Also, make a practice of noticing social cues. When you decided to shut people out because you felt you could never be acknowledged by them or be supported by them, there is a strong potential that you tuned other people out. You decided not to be attuned to them at all. This means you either ignore or dismiss subtle and not-so-subtle cues from other people all the time.

This can become a vicious cycle because it makes the world and intimacy more dangerous. When you don't pick up on social cues and adjust your behaviour accordingly, other people feel as if you don't have their best interests at heart. They perceive you to be a heartless person who can't be trusted. As a result, they decide to be in defence mode and not care about your best interest either. It becomes an antagonistic relationship, which is not safe to either party.

However, the more you notice social cues and respond to them in a way that makes people feel safe near you, the more they will want to care-take your needs, your personal truth and your best interests. So throughout your day, in every social interaction, practise reading the emotions of others and check in with them about whether what you are perceiving is accurate or not. This is a kind of attunement, a concept I will be explaining in more detail further on in this section.

If you fear intimacy, you have not been living authentically. Trying to be authentic around your parents is an intimate thing because trusting them with the truth of you had consequences. But notice the pain involved in living an authentic life. Anaïs Nin once wrote that, "The day came that the risk it took to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to bloom."

Have you reached that point yet? Has that day come? If so, commit to being authentic.

Setting the right priorities

Your fear of intimacy has made it so you subconsciously prioritize areas of your life where you don't have to experience vulnerability and strong emotions or needs. So you may focus almost exclusively on work or hobbies. But a life of achievement is useless, if you have no one to share it with.

What you really want and need is connection, closeness and to be truly seen, felt, heard and understood by someone. To get this, you are going to have to prioritize your relationships. You need to see that you can be loved for who you are, not for what you can do or for what you achieve. Strive to become

are, not for what you can do or for what you achieve. Survive to become comfortable with vulnerability, which is a strength not a weakness. It involves great courage to be vulnerable.

If we can choose to acknowledge and share our vulnerability in a situation, we can remain connected to the person we want to be connected with. We can bring resolve to what is real. We can meet the needs that are real. We can make our relationships feel good.

That is when you might notice that positive feelings trigger your fear of intimacy even more than negative ones. That's because when you feel another person loving you and demonstrating love for you and wanting connection with you, it conflicts with what you think is possible and with your own view of yourself.

As a result, you may feel suspicion and distrust for them at first and it can unwittingly trigger that deep-seated feeling that you developed in childhood, and it arouses all of that previous pain. To get away from the pain of that trigger, you may really want to disconnect from those feelings and create problems or tension in the relationship, pushing away the person who is trying to love you.

It's important to become aware of when you might be pushing people away. You can do this by asking them to tell you when something you say or do feels to them like a push away. You need to see this reflection of yourself in order to become more self-aware.

Even if you deeply fear intimacy, it's critical that you discover and admit your needs. Even though it's scary, express them to other people and allow them to choose to meet them. If you can't express them directly, express them indirectly. Write the various needs you have on a piece of paper and put the paper somewhere in the house where it is easy to see. Instead of expecting them to meet those needs or manipulating them to meet them, surrender into the vulnerability of letting others meet those needs because they want to and because your happiness is their happiness.

The good news is that when we come into contact with someone who wants to be connected and intimate with us as well, by doing so we will have a different experience than we had in the beginning of our life. This is what healing is all about. With the right person, you will experience someone who is able not only to accept, but also to love the truth of you and meet your needs because it brings them pleasure to do so.

Deep loneliness is caused by parallel realities

It's tempting to think that we can do without intimacy. The truth is we can't. Without intimacy in childhood, we don't develop a sense of our own existence

and we begin to feel as if we exist in a parallel reality, which is deeply isolating and that causes us to feel like we are alone, even in a crowded room.

Most people only really become conscious of the isolation of parallel perceptual realities when they go through something like the death of a loved one. When you experience intense grief, your world stops. You are in a reality of pain and terror about what could happen in the future and time moves differently.

Meanwhile, everyone else is going about their lives: smiling, laughing and talking about their jobs or vacations. They are telling you to come with them to the bar and cheer up. They are in a totally different reality, even though technically their bodies are in the same place. The worst part is they don't even notice. They won't notice what conflicts with their own reality.

I will never forget a time when I was at a public park. There was a girl on a park bench whose arms were bandaged from self-inflicted cuts. She was crying and yet people passed by her laughing, jogging and listening to their music in their headphones. Not one person noticed her or the state she was in. She might as well have been a ghost sitting on that bench. And all I could think to myself was: if these different realities can be upheld even if someone is cut up and crying, people who are less demonstrative or less obviously hurting have absolutely no hope.

There is no parallel reality that imprisons a person quite like the one that is set up by abuse. This is something that all survivors of sexual abuse and incest can attest to. If a person, like a father or an uncle for example, molests you, it's quite possible that an hour later, they will ask you whether you want mayonnaise on your sandwich. They will act like it never occurred. This is what creates a double life ... *a parallel reality*.

In one life, reality is torture, pain and danger, and your father or uncle is the enemy. But in the other life, reality is mundane. You go to school and you have Thanksgiving dinner and your father is *your father*. The mundane life starts to feel like a total lie. It feels *fake*. It feels like a cover for the *real reality*. When someone is trapped in their own reality like this, they can feel trapped completely alone and may even start to have thoughts of suicide.

Emotional invalidation

The foundation of parallel perceptual realities between people is emotional invalidation. To understand how this creates parallel realities, we have to go back to the beginning. I want you to imagine a little girl who is unhappy. She is in pain because her family had to move to a different town. She is lonely without her friends and afraid of the harshness of this new place. She misses so many

her friends and afraid of the harshness of this new place. She misses so many things about the old place. If she looks or acts unhappy, and her parents can't create intimacy, they will respond in one of two ways. They will either disapprove of her emotions, or they will dismiss or ignore her emotions.

A parent who disapproves of their child's emotions may reprimand or punish their child for any expression of uncomfortable emotions that are uncomfortable, and they may even trivialize the child's emotions. Yet, this same parent will quite likely continue to interact with the child as if she is fine.

You can see how this creates a parallel reality between the parents and the child. The child is now in a reality that hurts. In her reality, tragedy and loss has occurred. In her reality, her parents are not even there, even if they are in the same room physically. In the parent's reality on the other hand, they are meeting their child's needs and everything is good. In the minds of the parents, the move was a great one because it provided a new opportunity for better things. Since the parents can't actually see how their daughter feels or understand her, they can't actually make any changes that might improve the way she feels. She gets no support in her despair about the move. She is isolated completely in her own *parallel reality* and her parents don't even notice.

This is only one example but similar things happened to all of us, at one time or other, when we were growing up. Now imagine this happening with just about every person you know: each person carrying some kind of emotional invalidation forward into their adult years and carrying their deepest fears and loneliness into their current close relationships.

What has happened to us is the same as with this little girl. As life goes on for her, society around her began to mirror her split reality. She came to perceive herself to be in one parallel reality and everyone else in another. The torture of not only being in pain, but being in pain *alone*, watching people who are together and happy, is so horrific that she will most likely develop addictions and other avoidance techniques – anything to escape that pain. And to be honest, the pain of that condition is worse than any drug or addiction she could ever choose.

The sliding scale of emotional invalidation

These parallel perceptual realities can be created through much less extreme situations than overt abuse. We are at risk of developing them any time we experience people who don't see us, feel us or hear us. You can think of the level of extremeness of these parallel realities as existing on a kind of sliding scale. The more drastic the difference was between the realities that other people were perceiving as opposed to the one we were perceiving, the more severe the

isolation and pain we experience in conjunction with having these differing realities.

Some people only experience mild separation and only sometimes feel like they are in a separate reality. On the other end of the scale, some people feel so isolated by the intensity of their parallel perceptual reality that the reaction, or lack thereof, that they get from others can make them doubt if they even exist and leads to so much pain that they feel that committing suicide is the only way out.

When we look at the bigger picture, most mental illness is actually due to these parallel perceptual realities that we have not managed to integrate because the rest of the world judges them as false and invalid. If we judge other people this way, we can never join them wherever they are so as to make any improvement. We can never find a way to integrate their reality with our own.

Here are some examples of what I mean about mental illness really being about parallel perceptual realities:

- A paranoid schizophrenic lives in a different perceptual reality, one where people are after them.
- Someone suffering from PTSD is also living in a different perceptual reality, one where there is anger and trauma at every turn. An individual suffering from depression is in a perceptual reality of hopelessness where life is pointless.
- Someone who has panic attacks is in a different perceptual reality, one of imminent doom. In the middle of a panic attack, they look at everyone else around them in that moment operating in a reality where everyone where everything is normal and fine.

This is the most gas-lighting experience on Earth. To gas-light someone is to lead them to believe that their reality isn't real. For example, what they see, they didn't see. What they feel, they shouldn't feel or didn't feel. What they hear, they didn't hear.

I cannot explain to you the despair and terror that being stuck in these parallel perceptual realities creates. And it's not just torture for those who are stuck there, they eventually create torture for people who are not because the relationship between the two people deteriorates and they often lose the person they love because of it.

The pain of different perceptual realities that involve one person suffering alone is the worst form of suffering that a person can experience. Think about it: this pain is private and debilitating. It is like suffering behind a one-way mirror or a pane of glass, where you can see and hear other people, but no one can see or hear you. Compare this with pain experienced by people who are dealing with wars, natural disasters or famine. Those things are horrific but they are completely different to the personal pain caused by emotional invalidation, for one primary reason: the larger group is suffering together with people who are actually in the *same* painful reality.

The beauty of connection is that with it we can tear down the separation between these realities so that our perceptual realities can merge. One reality must begin to account for the other and vice versa. Once we understand this and heal ourselves, it's within our capacity to accommodate differing polarities and through that our consciousness can find true progression.

There is no possibility for two people to stay connected and close if they are in different parallel perceptual realities, no matter if their body is in the same place. And it is intimacy, attunement and authenticity that will bridge the gap between these parallel realities. The rest of this section is about how to develop the solutions for yourself.

The true meaning of authenticity

Authenticity is a word that you hear all the time, but what does it really mean? Something that is authentic is not copied. It's genuine, real and true. As authenticity applies to a human being, we must accept the fact that each and every person comes into this life as a unique expression of Source consciousness. This means each person comes in with a unique essence, like an energetic signature. We come in with a unique purpose, along with unique thoughts, feelings, desires and needs. All this and our role within the greater universe is embedded in our essence.

Our life experience is then a process of unfolding. You can picture your essence as a unique pearl contained inside of a tightly closed lotus flower. In a perfect world, that lotus blossom would bloom naturally to reveal the pearl within to the world. The parenting and socialization process would be a process of enabling every child to unfold in that way.

If we didn't interfere with this process and simply met the unique needs of each child in front of us, it would naturally happen this way. But this isn't the world we live in. When we come into the world, the people around us don't look at us like gifts to nurture so we can unfold and they can see the unique pearl within us. The people around us look at us as if we are a raw substance to mould

within us. The people around us look at us as if we are a raw substance to mould into what they think is best for us and for them. Anything that remotely resembles something that will meet with disapproval is something that we feel vulnerable about. And we begin a process of splitting ourselves.

We put forward only the things about us that make us loved and safe in the world. The rest, we keep hidden. And as you have seen throughout this book it means that our personalities are, in essence, *fake*. We became copies of other people, and therefore we don't reflect what is true at our core. As such, we end up having to sort through pretences to find what is real about us. It can feel like fumbling around in the dark.

Besides the fact that inauthenticity leads to an overall miserable life, the biggest problem with being inauthentic is that it makes true connection impossible. To be loved to our core, we have to actually expose it. If we want genuine connection, we need to be willing to show our genuine self.

Making your insides and outsides match

The simplest way to understand authenticity (beyond it being an uncovering of your personal essence) is that authenticity is *the conscious mending of the incongruencies between one's inner self and outer self*. So authenticity is when your inside matches your outside.

You have most likely heard the term "a wolf in sheep's clothing". This is an example of inauthenticity. The wolf is not a sheep; he is showing himself as a sheep to the outside when inside he is a wolf. It would be no better if a sheep was in wolf's clothing. That too is an example of inauthenticity.

Look around you and your friends, and you will find all kinds of incongruences between someone's inner and outer self. When a person works at a job they hate, it's inauthentic because their outer work does not match their inner desires for work. When a person says they like someone or acts as if they do, when the truth is they hate them and want to be nowhere near them, it's inauthentic. When a person says they aren't artistic, but the reality is that they suppressed that inner talent long ago, it's not authentic.

When we care so much about seeing ourselves as good that we cannot admit to aspects within us that wouldn't be seen as good, we are being inauthentic. Consider how some people have two Facebook accounts, one for the people they know from work and family and a second one for the things they are actually interested in but that they might be judged negatively for. That is being inauthentic. When we are gay but we pretend to be straight, we are being inauthentic.

It's not hard to see how our entire society today is based on pretences. But

the time has come for this to end. It's one of the greatest barriers to awakening and to connection. So the question to live by is: "Is there any incongruence between my outer self and inner self?"

In an ideal world, we would all be transparent, honest and authentic 24 hours a day. And this is the world I want to create.

The willingness to look bad

In order to become authentic you have to be willing to look bad to yourself and others. Or at least confront the incredible terror you have of doing this. As we know from the last section, we spend our whole lives trying to avoid shame and fear. Shame is the number-one enemy to the human ego. But this means that we are constantly avoiding anything that is real about us that could possibly make us look bad to ourselves or bad to others.

In this scenario, we are never actually able to face and work with what is real about us. Most often, we only stop this when we are in so much pain as a result of being inauthentic that we are finally willing to deal with the negative consequences of our authenticity. I'm asking you to make this leap before you get pushed up against a wall like that. Accept what is real about yourself, regardless of whether you judge it as bad or good.

Acceptance is the opposite of denial and avoidance. What does it mean to accept something? To accept is to recognize something as valid or correct. Acceptance makes you content to receive something and digesting it as truth instead of fighting to not acknowledge it and not take it in. Acceptance has nothing to do with condoning or condemning something. It has nothing to do with whether you want to change something or not. It's simply about being able to acknowledge something as valid enough to let it in your life.

The heart of authenticity

The heart of being authentic is being vulnerable. The reason we aren't authentic is because we are afraid of what will happen if we are. We are afraid that we will be rejected, unloved or not received. Many people think they are being authentic when they aren't because they are only exposing *part* of what is true.

Here is an example of what I mean. You could think it's authentic to express the following thought to someone else, "You know what? You're just too self-centred to pay attention to anyone except yourself and where you want to go." But this is actually just a defence. And it only represents your anger, when that is a small fraction of what is real. Being *authentic* might look something more like

this: “That was really scary. It made me feel like I was invisible and didn’t matter.”

One of the best ways to figure out how to express authentically is to ask yourself, “What is the opposite of being defensive in this scenario?” Whatever you are trying to defend is in fact the vulnerability that you need to be authentic about. Relative to authenticity, expression is about telling the whole truth, not just parts of it. And that includes a whole range of emotions.

The root of authenticity is knowing how you feel and admitting it to yourself, and subsequently to others. Your emotions then are like a compass that brings you straight to awareness. In the same way that a compass tells you where you are located in space and what direction to go, your emotions tell you what vibration you are currently holding and what direction to go to improve that personal frequency so the circumstances of your outer life will come into alignment with your essence.

Your emotions are also the doorway to discovering the subconscious limitations that are preventing your authenticity. We don’t collectively understand what emotions are and what purpose they serve. We are essentially living in an emotional dark age.

The self-awareness protocol

We will only ever get to what is real about us if we admit to the complete truth about how we feel. We will only be able to really connect with other people if we learn to express the truth of how we feel to others. There are five basic parts that make up the complete truth about how we feel in any given situation that upsets us. They are, in this order: anger, pain, fear, understanding and love.

Most of the time, we only allow ourselves to be aware of and express one part of the truth. For example, if we go out in our car and get rear-ended, we may immediately get really, really angry and blame the person who rear-ended us. We may only let ourselves and others become aware of the anger part of the truth about how we felt about getting rear-ended. When, really, the complete truth is much more complex and involves thoughts that correspond to each of the main emotions: namely anger, pain, fear, understanding and love.

In other cases, we may only let ourselves be aware that we are hurt or afraid due to a specific *conflict*, but never let ourselves or others become aware of the anger we feel. It’s a natural defence. It’s actually a common behaviour, which we learn in our formative years, to only allow ourselves to explore and express certain aspects of the complete truth and not others. But healing and self-love come from knowing and expressing all of it.

The following exercise is about uncovering the full truth of how you feel

THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE IS ABOUT UNCOVERING THE FULL TRUTH OF HOW YOU FEEL.

HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH

To start with, pick a situation that is upsetting you. And, as if you were bleeding yourself dry of emotion and thoughts, write down everything you can relative to each layer of truth, through each of the five emotional states.

While doing so, don't move on from one part (such as anger) to the next part (such as pain) until you feel that you have expressed and exhausted all thoughts and emotions that correspond to each specific part. Remember that emotions are healthy, so don't suppress any emotions that come up. Let yourself get really mad, let yourself cry with ugly sobbing and let yourself feel hope. Let yourself fully experience whatever emotions come to the surface without judgement.

In order to help the flow of truth, I have included a list of prompts below. Think about any upsetting event or situation in your life and write anything and everything you can about each of the following emotions.

1. Anger

- What am I angry about?
- What/whom do I blame and why?
- Whom/what do I feel resentment for and why?
- It makes me so mad when...
- I'm completely fed up with...
- I hate...

2. Pain

- What about this makes me so sad?
- I am so hurt by...
- I feel so disappointed that...

3. Fear

- What about this makes me so afraid?
- I'm scared that...
- It scares me when...

- Why does it scare me?
 - What about this embarrasses me?
 - What about this makes me feel insecure?
 - What is the deep wound hiding underneath the anger and sadness?
 - What painful thing does this situation remind me of?
4. Understanding
- I regret...
 - I'm sorry that...
 - What part of this situation do I take responsibility for?
 - I didn't mean to...
 - I understand that...
 - I know sometimes I ...
 - What do I want forgiveness for?
5. Love
- Deep down, I have the purest of intentions and they are...
 - Deep down, in my heart, I want...
 - I promise to...
 - What are some solutions to this situation that I can think of?
 - I hope that...
 - I feel gratitude for...
 - I forgive...

By digging down through these emotions using this technique, you reach your full truth. If you are having difficulty drilling down, refer to the sample responses I have written out in the next section. When you start to process upsetting things in your life this way, you begin to bring out your authentic self. What you discover represents the deepest truth in you about this situation.

Once you have that deepest truth about how you feel in your situation, you can directly address that and express that to others. Doing so means you are in a state of authenticity and you can expose the vulnerability that you were hiding and you can start to take loving care of that vulnerability. In doing so, you have uncovered your authentic self, which is what you

in doing so, you have uncovered your authentic self, which is what you need in order to truly connect intimately with other people and overcome loneliness and isolation.

Processing the truth about “the accident”

Here is a very brief example of someone using this process to tell the complete truth about the scenario I posed earlier. The starting event in this case is, “I just got rear-ended in traffic”.

ANGER: I can’t believe that I just got run into; this day could not get any worse! I hate that idiot. I hate people. I’m completely fed up with how stupid people are. It makes me so mad when I don’t do anything wrong and I still suffer the consequences. This is so unfair. I feel like killing him.

PAIN: It makes me sad that people get hurt in this world when they don’t deserve it. I am so hurt by the fact that it feels like other people have things go right for them, but nothing goes right for me. I’m sad that this car I love is damaged and that I have to drive around embarrassed because my car is dented in. I’m so disappointed that this night, which I thought was going to go so well, has gone terribly. That just hurts. It hurts really, really bad.

FEAR: I’m so afraid that life isn’t meant to be happy. I’m afraid that life is supposed to be about suffering. I’m afraid that I’m just here to suffer until I die. I’m afraid that if I find out that life is about suffering, I will fall into a deep depression and probably commit suicide. That’s really the wound that is underneath it all, the fact that I feel powerless to other people, just like I did when my father came home drunk and beat me up. One second I’d be watching TV and everything would be fine and the next, for no reason, he’d come in and start beating me up, and I was so little I couldn’t do anything about it.

UNDERSTANDING: I understand that I have no idea whether or not it’s true that life means suffering. It’s possible that I only feel that way because of my early experiences with my father. It’s possible that I think that way so often that I only make myself a match to seeing more and more proof of the fact that life means suffering. I regret that I got angry at the man driving that car. He’s probably having a terrible day too. I didn’t mean to take all of this fear out on a total stranger when it has to do with my childhood. I want forgiveness for the fact that I added to the problem instead of helping to solve it. LOVE: Deep down, my intention is to help everyone feel better,

including myself. To heal the part of me that feels like a victim and feels like this world is a scary, bad place to be, so I can find happiness. Deep down my intention is not to feel like I have to control everyone and everything, but that I can trust myself to create only good things for myself. I hope that the man who ran into me is not unhappy all day. I hope that he lets himself off the hook, because everyone makes mistakes. I forgive him for making a mistake. Honestly, I love other people and I want them to be happy. I want this world to be a happy place to be, where we can make mistakes and learn from them without being rejected or getting punished.

The practice of objective viewing

Another technique for facing and healing your emotions is to observe yourself *objectively*. Most of us don't see ourselves objectively and we are not aware of our actual actions. We spend our lives looking through the telescope of our own perspective. We watch other people, but not ourselves.

So I often suggest developing the habit of *objective viewing*. Whenever a strong emotion arises, face it within yourself instead of reacting to it or reacting in order to try to get away from it. When you feel it, use that feeling as a reminder that the feeling is the emotion becoming activated or charged like an electric fence. Become aware that it's not you getting upset or overcharged, it's the *emotion*. This is all it takes to disidentify with something enough to observe it.

When you're using this technique, don't try to stop caring about how you feel and don't try to change how you feel. Just recognize it and let it be there. You will often experience insight as a result of observing the emotion. You may discover what triggered it, what meaning you assigned to the trigger, and also insight about the situation that caused it.

It's helpful to think that, in the moment, you are becoming totally aware of your emotions, recognizing them and observing them without resistance to them. In essence, you are introducing the light of consciousness to them and thus you are becoming aware.

When it comes to *thoughts*, the technique of *observing* works the same way. An endless stream of thoughts is appearing across the canvas of our consciousness all day, every day. and most of them, we are totally unaware of. They may appear as pictures in our minds, a voice in our mind or as written words or beliefs, which feel like definitive statements. This technique encourages you to sit still and watch these thoughts as they appear. Don't try to

change them. Just recognize them and let them appear and then disappear.

When it comes to the body, you can also practise *observing* it. Observe the sensations that belong to it. When you recognize your body, which means to see it, feel it and consciously experience it, you are in that moment, *not* in your body. You have become dis-identified with your body, as a result you can become truly aware of the current truth of your body.

HOW TO OBJECTIVELY VIEW YOURSELF

Objectively viewing your feelings, thoughts, words and actions is an effective and easy way to become aware of the discrepancy between your inner and outer worlds. Try to do an objective viewing practice on a daily or weekly basis until it becomes part of your everyday response.

To objectively view yourself, close your eyes and imagine stepping outside your body and watching yourself from a bird's eye view. Watch as if you are literally a bird who has no attachment to the human you that it's watching, as it would observe any other thing.

You can now re-witness arguments you've had from this perspective. Re-watch what you did over the course of an entire day or week. Re-watch yourself in the shower. Re-watch yourself at work. Re-watch yourself making love. The sky is the limit for situations you can watch yourself in. Just notice what you see.

If you really want to be committed to seeing yourself objectively, film yourself. But notice the tightness in your body when you know someone is or could be watching you. Notice when you alter your behaviour or tailor your response to what you know will be approved of when you are being filmed. We always see the truth of the discrepancy between our inner and outer world when we don't know we are being filmed.

You can only work with something that is real. Unless you *know and admit* to what you really think, really feel, really want, really need and actually do, you are working with illusion and you are not going to get anywhere. It's like building a castle on thin air. It will crumble. Anything in life can either be true to our unique essence or the very thing that is preventing us from uncovering that unique essence. Literally anything you do that makes you more self-aware is a step in the direction of authenticity.

Authenticity is the highest state of being that one can achieve. In the years to come, authenticity will become the replacement for enlightenment

as the true goal of spiritual practice and, more than that, the true goal of life itself. Once we take on that focus, our society will be an expression of our collective authentic human essence.

The inauthenticity of “needing space”

If you're reading this book, it's because you are lonely. You need connection. But do you frequently find that you need space to yourself? Do you identify yourself as someone who likes to be alone? The human race is a social species. Our species' survival depended (and still does depend) on each other. Technically the top human need is connection and the single biggest threat to our wellbeing is isolation. So how can it be that you need space and alone time so badly?

I want you to notice that when you need to be alone, or need some space, this never includes being away from plants. It never includes being away from your dog or cat. You don't look down at your dog and say, “I just need some space right now and time to myself” and then close the door to your room with them outside of it. So what makes *people* so different for you? What is it about being *with people* that makes you need to get away and be by yourself?

If you need space to yourself and identify yourself as someone who needs alone time, it's because you are struggling with inauthenticity. The difference between your dog and a person is that you feel like you can completely be in alignment with your unique desires, needs, perspectives, feelings, thoughts and do what you want to do when you are with *your dog* and you don't feel like you can do any of that with *a person*.

If you feel this way, notice that there is a big incongruence between your internal self and your external self when you are around people. It leads to both pressure and exhaustion. It's hard to act differently than you feel. It's hard to do what you don't want to do. It's hard to tailor every word and action to the response you want to get from them.

The way you feel is quite likely related to enmeshment trauma. Enmeshment is a situation in which a person is not allowed to have autonomy. Enmeshment trauma occurs when personal boundaries are not acknowledged, seen as valid or respected. It's most common in households where an adult refuses to see a child as their own person and instead regards them as an extension of themselves.

If you experience enmeshment trauma the minute that a person steps into the room, you will instantly feel as if you need to cater your every thought, word and action to *their* desires, needs, perspective and preferences. You immediately

lose your authenticity for the sake of the connection and it's like walking on broken glass. The tension and pressure you feel as a result of not being able to be natural will be immediate.

The way your boundaries dissolve is a bit terrifying. It's as if around other people, you can't figure out how you feel, you can't figure out what you really think, what you really want, what you really need and you can't act in accordance with any of this personal truth. You have lost access to your personal truth.

As a result, the people who are in relationships with you often suffer because they feel constantly pushed away by you. They feel like this because they are right. They are being pushed away. Pushing people away is not a good thing, especially if you are pushing away people that you love. This hurts them and ultimately you as well. It's a reaction you have to the threat of absorption.

Being alone can be a good tool to use to get in touch with yourself. But remember that it's a tool. It's not actually *necessary* for a physical human. Feel the resistance you just had to that statement. That should tell you something about yourself. It would not be necessary if you felt like you could be authentic around people. One of the hardest things for the human species to learn is, "I can have myself and have you too."

Boundaries in a universe that is all one

If you struggle with the issue of needing space in your relationships and from other people, the first thing you need to work on is boundaries. As you know, boundaries are about having a sense of yourself and others, and it's a natural part of participating in this physical dimension.

Your individual perspective and experience is what currently serves the expansion of this universe, so you naturally perceive a difference between yourself and the rest of the world. This individual perspective is a kind of boundary that defines us from everything else.

We have heard again and again from self-help experts and psychologists that it's crucial to our wellbeing to develop healthy boundaries. But what are they? Boundaries are guidelines for how someone relates the self to the rest of the world. They are rules of conduct built out of a mix of beliefs, opinions, attitudes, past experiences and social learning. So think about the word *boundary* as something that defines you – it is a preference not a fence.

A boundary is the imaginary line that uniquely defines your personal happiness, feelings, thoughts, integrity, desires and needs, and therefore most importantly your truth, from the rest of the universe.

Personal boundaries operate in two directions, affecting both the incoming

Personal boundaries operate in two directions, affecting both the incoming and outgoing interactions between people. Personal boundaries help to define an individual by outlining likes and dislikes and what is right for them personally or wrong for them personally. Defining these things helps us to know how we will and won't allow ourselves to be treated by others.

Here are some signs that you have unhealthy boundaries:

- Saying no when you mean yes or saying yes when you mean no.
- Feeling guilty when you do say no.
- Acting against your integrity or values in order to please others.
- Not speaking up when you have something to say.
- Adopting another person's beliefs or ideas so you are accepted.
- Not calling out someone who mistreats you.
- Accepting physical touch or sex when you don't want it.
- Allowing yourself to be interrupted or distracted to accommodate another person's immediate wants or needs.
- Giving too much just to be perceived as useful.
- Becoming overly involved in someone's problems or difficulties.
- Allowing people to say things to you or in front of you that make you uncomfortable.
- Not defining and communicating your emotional needs in your relationships.

The biggest issue isn't that other people violate our boundaries, it's that we violate our own boundaries. Any time that we let someone violate our boundaries, we violate our own boundaries. This is self-betrayal. If you go against your personal boundaries, you violate yourself, you abandon yourself and you allow self-hate to rule the day.

Boundaries can get very complicated so I'm going to make them very easy for you to understand. Your boundaries are defined by your feelings and your feelings will always tell you whether a boundary of yours has been violated, no matter what kind of boundary it is.

For example, if someone said something that hurt you, it means they crossed an emotional boundary and you will feel hurt, which is your indication that your boundaries need to be communicated better. Another example could be,

someone asks you to a party and you feel as if you don't want to go, but you go anyway, you feel bad, which is your indication that you have violated your own boundary. This is why it's so crucial to be in touch with how you feel all day, every day.

This internal self-betrayal is what caused us to stop trusting ourselves. Self-trust is all about capitalizing on your own best interests. Your own best interests are essentially a boundary because it is something that uniquely defines you. Therefore, self-trust is all about boundaries. Most of us are caught in a habitual pattern of abandoning ourselves. Abandoning ourselves is not in our own best interest. This is the real reason why we don't trust ourselves. People don't trust themselves when they feel unsafe. *And we feel unsafe when we watch ourselves make decisions that don't feel good or act in a way that doesn't represent our true selves.*

When we ignore the way we really feel, and abandon our personal truth, we become in essence untrustworthy to ourselves. The only way to begin trusting yourself is to learn how to tune back in to how you feel and then honour how you truly feel. In the meantime, we have most likely created a false self as a self-protection mechanism.

How do you know if you have set up a false self? Just ask yourself these questions:

- Do I know what I really want?
- Do I let other people tell me what to think or believe and how to feel?
- Do I do things I don't really want to do and say yes when I really want to say no or say no when I really want to say yes?
- Am I afraid to let people know how I really feel?
- Am I afraid of people thinking negatively of me?

Developing healthy boundaries

Healthy boundaries are non-resistant in nature. They do not exist to oppose someone else's boundaries and thus they are in alignment with oneness. They are not about controlling what other people do and don't do. They are entirely about you personally defining and then following your individual sense of happiness, desires and personal truth.

If you're feeling bad about having said yes to something you don't really

If you're feeling bad about having said yes to something you don't really want to do, it's time to reassert your boundaries. If people in your life are making you feel bad in any way, it's time to reassert your boundaries. To do this, list the ten things in your life that you are the unhappiest about right now. Then list ten things you'd like other people to stop doing around you or to you or saying to you. It may even help to list the people in your life one by one and write down how you feel around them.

Then, relative to every item on the list, ask yourself, "How am I violating my own boundaries and letting someone violate my boundaries?" In other words, figure out how you really feel and what you really want. An example may be, your spouse watches TV after coming home from work and ignores you. This makes you feel rejected and unloved, like a void of loneliness is welling up inside of you.

By doing this, you feel that he is violating an emotional boundary and you're not OK with people treating you like this. So you may decide to write him a letter expressing how you feel. Once you discover that a boundary violation has occurred, it's crucial to make some changes based on how you really feel. Decide on specific action you can take and do it.

Remember, as time goes on, your boundaries won't stay the same and will require updating. Perhaps the time you can give to others is more limited after starting a new relationship or having a baby. Redefining your boundaries throughout your life is a crucial part of staying true to yourself.

Regardless of whether people are or aren't there with you, you need to start consciously getting in touch with your personal integrity, desires, feelings, thoughts, needs and truth, and then communicate that and act in alignment with that.

How to avoid manipulating others

If you struggle with connection, the reality is that you have been put in a position to reject yourself and thus see yourself as not deserving of your needs. As a result, you repress, reject and deny your own needs, which puts you in a state of starvation. Once you are in that survival mode, your being starts to only worry about itself. Within that narcissistic state, your being will manipulate subconsciously to get its needs met. This only makes you lonelier because people will feel that manipulation and gravitate away from you, leaving you even more starved.

No matter how much you may want it to be different, you have needs. Every being on Earth has needs. A need is something that is required in order to live, succeed or be happy. You cannot argue your way into seeing that it is

unnecessary. You have one option when it comes to your needs and that is to meet them.

I'm going to repeat what I just said so it sinks in: your only option when it comes to needs is to meet them. Why? It's because if you don't meet those needs consciously, you will meet them subconsciously. This is manipulation.

Manipulation carries a big stigma and it might sound as if someone is malevolently controlling someone else. In reality, it's highly subconscious and is also quite innocent. Manipulation is what we do when we feel we cannot meet our needs directly, so instead we try to meet them in roundabout ways. We try to influence others to do what we want them to do so our needs are met.

For example, a person who needs to feel safe, but who cannot ask directly to be protected, may create a situation where they have to be rescued or paint a false picture that they are in danger so other people will step up and offer their protection. Or a person who needs help or needs to feel supported, but who cannot ask directly for help or support, may develop an illness that makes it so that other people have to help or support them. Or a person who needs to feel accepted, but who can't seek that out directly, will become a chameleon to try to influence people to accept him or her.

Every one of us manipulates but to what degree are we conscious of our manipulation? Some common ways of manipulating people are lying, dropping hints, guilting others, self-sacrificing, being passive aggressive or using emotional punishment against them. Other ways might be insincere flattery, being a chameleon, being seductive, making false promises, doing favours, making yourself out to be the victim or making threats. Keep in mind that we all use what we have, so we will usually manipulate people with whatever is currently working to our advantage.

Manipulation doesn't make you a bad person, but dare to take a look at your life and ask yourself, "How do I manipulate? In what ways do I ensure that I will get the reaction I want from others instead of just asking for what I want upfront? In what ways do I think I can meet other people's needs just so that they can meet mine?"

Manipulation will always feel out of alignment with your own sense of integrity because you are not being authentic. And stopping ourselves from manipulating is difficult for one major reason: it requires us to be brave enough to be vulnerable. And we already know how hard it is to be vulnerable when we have so much to lose.



HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR NEEDS

Here are two ways for you to get in better touch with what you want and need. For the first one, take some time to ask yourself what it is that you really need or really want. If you need help, look on the Internet for a list of needs, which might be physical, mental or emotional. And from those lists, make a list of your individual needs. Then, whenever you feel negatively, go to the list and identify the need you have and find ways to fulfil that need or express it to others in a healthy way. In my intentional community, sometimes we bring these sheets of needs to someone else in the community and ask them to point to the one they need.

The second technique is that throughout the day ask your inner child what it needs. Inner children are better at picking out the need they have from a list than they are at verbally expressing it. With each and every need, you can then brainstorm ways to meet the need yourself or have the need met in a healthy way by others. Involve other people in this task if you get stuck. If you are truly clueless about your needs and wants, take a look at what you know that you don't want. To the other side of each of those aversions you will find your preferences.

You may have heard of the hungry ghost, which represents greed. The hungry ghost story explains the concept of giving in to your needs means they never stop, and you just keep wanting more and more. This couldn't be any further from the truth because if our needs were met consistently we wouldn't be concerned with the self-centred desire to hoard resources.

When you are compiling your needs, know that no need is too childish. It's tempting to see needs such as being held or comforted as being childish. But, as you know, these needs often exist in us as adults because they were not met in childhood so we never actually matured past that point. And it may be tempting to think that if we start to meet the needs of the inner child as an adult, that the inner child will never be satiated. But it will and the result will be that the inner child will finally grow up. In other words, if needs were not met in childhood, they must be met in our adult life. And as a side note, they will be met by us in roundabout ways whether we like it or not. In fact most of the sexual fetishes in the world are actually about unfulfilled childhood needs.

Who will meet all these needs?

For those of you who are wondering, what if your partner doesn't want to meet

your needs, here's your answer. Ideally, your needs would be met through various people, not just one. Powerless dependence happens most often when one person is your sole resource for your needs being met. But you have to be very honest with yourself about what needs you specifically want your partner to meet and which ones you are OK with getting from someone else. This is an individual preference.

And if you find that your partner cannot meet your specific needs, let yourself find another partner. Honouring a person when they say "no" to meeting your needs is a very important thing because it means you can put them in the proper place in your life.

Here's an example. If one of your needs in a partnership is emotional availability and your partner can't be emotionally available, you can now choose to take them out of the role of partner and place them in a friendship role or choose to alter your expectation if that is possible. Or you can choose to be unfulfilled in that partnership. It's better to not make each other miserable, resenting each other for things you aren't providing for each other.

At the end of the day, the primary need in all beings is the need for love. However, because of our life experiences, we have beliefs standing in our way, such as, "love is not possible". We may have experienced pain in conjunction with love, so now we are afraid of love and so don't allow in the very thing that we need and want so desperately.

For this reason, it's critical to learn how to feel. If you're unaware of how you feel you won't recognize the feelings of upset, dissatisfaction, craving, wanting or desperation. When we feel that lack, we can ask: "What is it that the feeling is telling us we need and want at this moment?"

The question to ask yourself once you know what your unmet need is: "What would I have to give up in order to have this need filled?" For example, in my case, for me to be able to feel love when I'm sitting in the room with someone, I would have to give up my belief that love is dangerous. I would also have to give up my constant thinking because my mind brings me out of my body so much so that I can't feel connected to people as "real people" in the room. I would have to give up the story that I always lose what I love. And I would have to give up sending text messages to that person who never sends any back.

The mental understanding of what you would have to *give up* in order to get your needs met offers you the potential of being able to directly face those barriers, change your beliefs and take different actions. But far beyond that is experiencing the needs being met in whatever small way that you have access to in an embodied way. Below are some examples of how you can make this work.

I call it the “Meeting Your Needs Game”.

MEETING YOUR NEEDS GAME

Say for example you want connection. Obviously the way to meet this need is to sit in the room with someone and give them your undivided attention and open up with them, and they do the same thing with you. When you do this, just focus on connecting to them. Watch the resistance that comes up. Observe the thoughts that come up in response and the emotions that surface. Stay with that resistance long enough to feel it settle. And in that space, after you have become aware of where you can't feel that connection, seek out where in your body you *can* feel that connection, even if it's only in your skin or your knees. Once you can feel it anywhere, then imagine or sense yourself spreading that good feeling throughout your whole body.

Here's another example. If you need abundance, go to the places that feel abundant. Go to a fancy place and sit there. Try to feel like you are a king. Feel wealth in your body. Watch the resistance come up. Listen to the thoughts that come up and the painful memories and stories about the future and about yourself. Stay with it long enough to settle. In that space, see where you can't feel abundant. And see where you *can* feel abundant. Try and see if you can spread that feeling of abundance throughout your whole body.

Here's one more example of this technique. If you have a need for something that you have no real experience of, because it feels too inaccessible to you, you can invoke the experience of something that is the closest to it. For example, I may not be able to feel the feeling of belonging. But the closest to that feeling I've ever experienced is the way I felt when I was toasting marshmallows on a camping trip. I can focus on that experience and when I feel my emotions respond to that, I can take that feeling into my body and into my heart and into every tiny cell. I can use any frame of reference that is the closest to the feeling of what I want. It can be a memory, a fantasy of the future, a song, a scene on a movie I watched, a thing, a place, a person... *anything*.

We can even begin to play this game with shame itself. What would be the opposite feeling of shame for you specifically? Perhaps it's the feeling of self-esteem. Maybe the closest feeling to self-esteem is to be a singer on

stage in front of thousands of fans. So put on some music, close your eyes and for five minutes imagine being on stage in front of thousands of fans. Imagine every detail about how good that would feel and how different your body would feel and how different your thoughts would be. Put yourself in the state of *having* the closest experience to what you want.

Or maybe the closest to the opposite of shame for you is warm acceptance. Perhaps the closest you can imagine to that state is when your grandmother held you. So close your eyes and for five minutes imagine what it felt like to nestle against her and to see the way she looked at you and to smell her. Imagine every detail about how your body felt and how you felt emotionally to be embraced in that warm acceptance as if it could be yours forever. We need to get into the habit of doing this on a daily basis with the things we feel we lack in our lives.

Why does this technique work so well? It's because the universe functions like a mirror. Whatever is inside your mind and emotions will reflect in the external world exactly.

And things of like frequency match and coalesce. This is the real reason that people who were born wealthy have no problem creating wealth. They don't often have many thoughts, actions or life experiences that contradict the frequency of wealth. And they are around lots of other people who are wealthy. There is nothing in their reality, no external thoughts, actions or items of proof to contradict "wealth". In the absence of any contradiction, nothing is preventing them from manifesting that need immediately.

When you release resistance to the things that are preventing you from having what you need, you can allow yourself to feel the opposite vibration from that *lack*. In this vibration, you are a match to those needs being met in everincreasing ways. Your needs will be met by virtue of the very fact that you are not in the vibration of *lack* any longer. And in this vibration, you will be inspired to take different actions, actions that will simply further manifest that need being met. You'll naturally begin to see ways to meet your own needs. You will be a match to people who can meet those needs. You will align with the circumstances necessary to bring about what you want. In other words, the "how" to accomplish those goals and meet your needs will be revealed to you.

Reaching connection through attunement

When we are born, we cannot conceptualize of ourselves as being different to others. Our ego is not formed yet. We experience the distress of others as our

others. Our ego is not formed yet. We experience the distress of others as our own. But as we grow, we begin to conceptualize ourselves as having autonomous feelings and desires. This is when the table flips. We still don't fully conceptualize of other people as different to ourselves. But instead of seeing ourselves as an extension of the world around us, we see everything in our world as an extension of ourselves.

To understand this concept better, imagine a two-year-old child. The average two-year-old perceives that the world revolves around him or her completely. Essentially, we have an egocentric worldview. This is why we take everything personally as children because we can't practise external consideration yet.

So now we go back to the toddler. He doesn't think about how his whining or crying affects his mother. He simply whines and cries because that is the truth about how he feels. Likewise, the two-year-old doesn't think about the perspectives or feelings of a kitten he encounters. He picks it up by the neck because that is the most convenient way for him to pick up the kitten. When the kitten screams in pain and terror, he doesn't understand what the kitten is experiencing, so he doesn't think to put the kitten down. Potentially the kitten could die and then the two-year-old will be confused about what happened and isn't aware he had anything to do with it, because he was not *attuned* to the kitten.

Attunement is being in harmony or bringing into harmony where you experience being "at one" with something. The best way to understand attunement is to imagine sitting in your car and reaching out for the radio dial. If you want to hear the music being played at a specific frequency, like 98.2 FM, you need to tune your radio dial accordingly. Then you will hear the music. Your own radio dial needs to be brought into harmony with or become one with the radio channel you want to receive in order to perceive that radio channel.

It's no different with other beings, including people. To be able to perceive other people and to feel, see, hear, understand and communicate with them, you need to attune to them. You need to tune in to them *as if you are them* so you can feel or imagine that other person's emotional experience and understand what they are feeling. This is what allows you to know what to do in any given situation to end conflict, to improve a situation or to assist someone.

Attunement naturally gives rise to empathy. The most dangerous people in the world are people who are in an egocentric bubble. They are essentially toddlers in a grown-up body holding kittens by the neck. But those kittens are other people. And even though it would be great if all people just naturally developed out of the egocentric bubble and into attunement, the reality is that some people don't. They stay in a reality built for one.

When you are in a relationship with this kind of person, you end up feeling

lonely, unseen, unheard, unfelt, misunderstood and abused. You will feel like you are living in an entirely different reality than the other person. You will feel this way because you quite literally are. You and this person are on entirely different frequencies and they are unwilling to tune in to yours. It's the same as trying to find harmony when you are on the 98.2 FM station and your partner is on the 94.5 AM station.

How attuned are you?

Attunement is when you are able to understand that other people think in ways that are both similar to and different from the way that you do, and that they also have emotions they associate with those thoughts.

The development of attunement and healthy empathy has to do with how we are raised. We learn by virtue of example primarily. We learn attunement when other people are attuned to us. Ask yourself the following questions: "Do I feel like my parents understood me when I was little, or even tried to understand me? Did they see into me and feel into me and have empathy for me and adjust their behaviour accordingly or not? Did they acknowledge how I felt or did they invalidate it, telling me I shouldn't feel that way? How did my parents treat me when I was cranky, frightened or upset?"

When our parents were not attuned to us, we went one of two ways to cope with the terror of that experience:

1. We learned that our survival depended on disconnecting from them and retreating into a narcissistic bubble where all that was real and all that mattered was our individual experience.
2. We learned that our survival depended on being hyper-attuned to the people in our lives so that we could perceive them, anticipate their behaviour and make adjustments to our behaviour accordingly in order to avoid harm to ourselves.

There are benefits and drawbacks to both coping styles but neither state is healthy. It's not a fulfilling life to spend all your energy obsessively trying to keep yourself safe by attuning to other people. To do that, you end up tuning out to yourself.

But here are the big benefits to being attuned and why it's worth striving to reach this goal. You cannot be attuned to a child and have them grow up

narcissistic or co-dependent. You cannot be attuned to someone and drop a bomb on them or shoot them. You cannot be attuned to someone and say the wrong thing to them. You cannot attune to someone and stay in denial about his or her reality. And the bottom line is: unless you learn how to attune, your relationships will be riddled with conflict and painful for everyone around you, eventually making it painful for you as well.

The attunement game

Attunement begins with a choice similar to the choice to turn your car dial to the radio station you want. You are not going to understand this concept at an emotional level yet, so instead think of it as awareness and watching the world around you and the people in it. Consider that you are living your life in a bubble where nothing can come in. There are layers and layers in between you and them. You've got to pop that bubble so you can see them, feel them, hear them and really tune in to their frequency. Start making a practice of really *watching* the world as if you are an FBI agent whose job is to perceive every single thing you can perceive about your environment and the people in it. Make a game of it.

Face any resistance you feel to coming out of the egocentric bubble if that is the coping strategy that helped you survive childhood. Know now that it's harming people around you and ultimately this harms you in the long run. Start by being honest with yourself about *why you don't want to attune to other people*.

Ask yourself: "What would attuning to other people mean? What would be so bad about really seeing them, feeling them, understanding them and perceiving their reality?" The bubble around you is about controlling your own reality, but ask yourself now, "Why do I need to control my reality?" It's tempting to think that the egocentric bubble is a good thing because it feels better than becoming aware of things that don't feel good.

But don't confuse this with deliberate creation of your reality. There is a difference between *creation* of reality and *resistance* to reality. The egocentric bubble is the opposite, like an addiction, it's an escape. It's a resistance to *what is*. This is why, inevitably, it leads to negative results like failed relationships and aloneness.

Once you are willing to be vulnerable enough to really feel strong emotion, including what other people feel, everything changes. Attunement causes you to experience strong authentic emotions as opposed to emotions related to suppression, avoidance, denial or defensiveness. For example, feeling the sadness inside someone may make you cry. Let this process happen. If you are

sadness inside someone may make you cry. Let this process happen. If you are concerned with staying strong and not being vulnerable, you won't let yourself attune to anyone when they are in a state that threatens your own sense of peace.

When it comes to attunement, you cannot rush into action. In fact, you cannot even see the right action to take or the solution. Imagine seeing a fish in a tank that is sick. If you rushed into a solution, you might feed the fish. You simply guessed at what was wrong, so assumed the solution was to feed the fish. You were not attuned enough to see that the fish actually needed you to change the water. The same is true for people. Become fully attuned and aware of the other person, and from there a solution will naturally arise and this time it will be the right one.

HOW TO PRACTISE ATTUNEMENT

If no one properly attuned to you when you were little, you didn't grow up attuned to yourself. So a good place to start is to try to tune in to your own emotions. Whenever you experience things that either cause an emotional reaction, or that you think should cause an emotional reaction, ask yourself the following questions and be as brutally honest about them as you can.

- What was my perception of what happened?
- What was troubling to me about what happened?
- What were the emotions that I felt at the time it happened?
- What emotions am I feeling in this exact moment?
- What do I really need from other people in this circumstance?

Once you see the answers you have given to these questions, ask yourself, "What do I feel like I need to do now given these answers I have now become aware of?"

Connect with and integrate your Inner Twins

Let me now go back to one of the most essential concepts to understand, if you truly want to overcome loneliness. We know now that everyone we know, including ourselves, became fragmented through our upbringing and socialization process. If we can accept the view of ourselves that we are fragmented, we can start to recognize the fragmented aspects of ourselves when they arise

they arise.

When we adopt this view of ourselves, we can take on the perspective that every shift within our energy, each shift in the way we feel or in the thoughts we are thinking, all these things are indications that we are dealing with a different fragment within us. This is especially true if these feelings, thoughts or energies contradict one another.

Another way of saying this is that we need to consider that we live our lives in a state of ever-changing possession. At any given moment, we are being “possessed” by one of our internal Inner Twins, a separate kind of personality that was created when we fragmented.

Each time we experience a change in ourselves, such as a strong emotion or certain thoughts or we start to act differently or carry our body differently, we need to consider that one of our Inner Twins has taken over. For that moment, we identify with that Inner Twin and let it take us over. So, for example, when we feel totally conflicted and not at peace with ourselves because we have to make an important decision, two of our Inner Twins may be at war with one another.

Remember from our previous discussion, the reason we experience ourselves as being in a parallel reality from other people and thus unable to connect with other people, is because our Inner Twins are experiencing different realities. If we want to feel connection so that our loneliness dissipates, we need to create connection between and integration with our Inner Twins. We need to get them into the same reality and onto the same page in a harmonious way with one another.

Establishing trust between and re-integrating our fragmented Inner Twin personalities

There are several strategies to use for establishing trust between and re-integrating our fragmented Inner Twin personalities, but first we need to become aware of them. Any time an energetic shift happens within you or you notice yourself reacting to things in strong ways, consider that one of your Inner Twins has taken over within your body. You can use it as an opportunity to become aware of that specific part within you and heal it through re-integration.

Let's take the example of two Inner Twins at war with one another, where one has taken over the body. Whenever you feel yourself shifting into a different energy, you can close your eyes and ask to see a visual image of the Inner Twin that has taken over within you. See this first Inner Twin in your mind's eye. Let the image appear however it appears. Wait to see what image presents itself. For example it may show up as a small child a skeleton a coloured mist or a

example, it may show up as a small child, a skeleton, a coloured mist or a warrior on horseback. If it helps you, see if this part has a name.

At that point, we can begin to observe this particular Inner Twin and study its behaviours, perspectives, wants, needs and motivations. We can ask it questions and explore its relationship to other parts within us. We can find out when and how it was created as well as what purpose it serves in our lives. Once we figure out its motivations, we can meet its needs with our imagination and subsequently implement the changes this part of us needs in our day-to-day life.

For example, perhaps the Inner Twin personality presenting itself is a War General and the personality to the exact opposite of it, the one that the War General is currently playing a zero-sum game with, shows up as a little Garden Fairy.

We can do this process with the War General and then we can repeat this process with the second Inner Twin within us, the little Garden Fairy that distrusts the first one we just explored. Just like we did with the War General, we can ask to see this other part in our mind's eye. Again, let the image appear however it appears and if it helps us we can see if this part within us has a name.

Now is the time to observe this particular second Inner Twin and study its behaviours, perspectives, wants, needs and motivations. We can ask it questions, explore its relationships and find out when and how it was created, as well as what purpose it serves in our lives. Once we figure this out, we can meet its needs with our imagination and subsequently implement the changes this part of us needs in our day-to-day life.

Once we find a way to meet the needs of both parts of ourselves, both of these Inner Twin personalities, then they will no longer be in a zero-sum game with one another. By doing this technique, we can improve the relationship that each part has with every other part within us, creating internal peace and integration.

The sky is the limit for what you can do once we invite the awareness of these fragmented Inner Twins into your awareness. Allow yourself to be guided by the intention to create relief within these individual inner aspects and create harmony and unification between these aspects.

When you get these inner parts to a state where they are no longer pushing each other away and creating separation between them, your sensation of tension and loneliness will go away.

Make a strong connection through understanding

We spend an inordinate amount of time in relationships trying to figure out *how* to connect with someone and *how* to make the other person happy. We want to

love them in a way that they can really feel that love, but we don't know how. To take someone as part of yourself – which is what love is – you need to understand them.

For this reason, I am going to tell you that to really love someone in a way where they will feel loved and to really establish connection with them, you must understand them. I am going to go even further with this and say that you should *stop trying to love them and start trying to understand them instead*.

When you understand someone, you know them on a mental, emotional and physical level. And the best part about this is, it's no longer a guessing game. You don't have to guess what that person needs and wants. You don't have to guess because you *know*.

This may be a new concept for you as it is for most people. We just don't tend to take the time or put forth the energy to really understand and get to know each other. Usually, we enter into relationships, whether it is a friendship, intimate partner or co-worker, simply because we feel that we like them. They add something to our lives. Because of this, we are in a relationship with the idea of them instead of the actuality of them. Establishing a relationship is a highly unconscious process. Where does this lead? *Disaster*.

To help you to understand why this is a nightmare, try to imagine that a young child loves a little jellyfish at an aquarium so his parents buy him that jellyfish. The child does not know anything about jellyfish. All he knows is he loves it. And the child loves him in the way that he feels loved. He takes the jellyfish out of the water and holds it in a blanket. He sings it a bedtime song. He tries to feed it a candy bar. He puts it back in the water.

Are you imagining what that whole scene looked like? By the time the jellyfish is put back in the water, the jellyfish is dead. The child is devastated. He doesn't understand why the jellyfish is dead. He may even blame the jellyfish for dying when all he did was show it so much love. Sounds a lot like what we feel and act like when someone we are in love with breaks up with us, doesn't it?

The parallels are these. The child did not understand his new pet any better than we often do when we create a relationship with someone new. Because we don't understand our friend or partner, we do all the wrong things for them, thinking that they are the right things for them.

And when we don't understand someone, we cannot know if they are genuinely compatible with us. For example, what if we don't understand how much time that person needs us to be around them. They might need a partner who is always available and close to home, but we may choose to marry them even though what is the best for us is to be home only half of the time because of the business we have. As a result, that kind of relationship will be miserable, full

of conflict and will eventually dissolve.

As for understanding someone, this isn't really rocket science. Do the same thing you would do if you were obsessed with something as a kid. Immerse yourself in it completely. Let curiosity and the desire to know drag you mercilessly forward. When you were young, if you loved horses, you checked out every book on the subject. You spent hours staring at them. You took riding lessons. You did anything you could do to become an expert on them. And if a scientist becomes interested in something that is unknown, he takes it upon himself to study it so that all its properties and aspects become known. If you become this passionate about understanding your friend or lover, you'll have a much better chance for a successful and lasting connection.

Start off on an authentic foot

A major reason that we want to be connected with someone is because we want our inner world to be seen, felt, heard and understood. But because we are so insecure in relationships, we spend our time trying to convince someone that we are a person that we think they are going to accept. We play a role that has gotten us acceptance in the past or that we know most people accept. This is ironic because by trying to be liked and loved, we guarantee that we never will be.

Here's why. If you never show your real self to someone, you are never giving them the opportunity to see, feel, hear or understand the real you, then how can they ever really love you? This means, when you are trying to establish connection with someone, you need to be honest, genuine and authentic. Transparency rules the day when it comes to connection.

You're not going to be able to keep up a facade so don't even think about putting your best foot forward, just put your *authentic* foot forward. If you try to play a role instead of being yourself exactly as you are here and now, people who connect with you are the ones who love the *role you play* and not you. All people are sensitive to energy, whether they know it or not. The scariest thing in the world is pretence. The other person can feel it if you're acting one way but the feeling of the "you" underneath is contrary to your actions.

That's why I suggest being open if you are trying to connect with someone. Be an open book. *Openness is emotional generosity*. If you want connection you've got to let someone into you and be willing to go into them. This comes back to the vulnerability we've been speaking about and it's a big part of connection. Part of that generosity could be paying them a sincere and genuine compliment. It's a great way to start a conversation or a friendship.

The real point of connection is to find someone who can be fully with you

THE REAL POINT OF CONNECTION IS TO FIND SOMEONE WHO CAN BE FULLY WITH YOU, accepting the positive with the negative, not someone who needs all of your life to be positive in order to love you. That would be conditional love. So don't be afraid to include them in your life. Offering information about yourself, even if they don't ask for it, will help others feel included and wanted by you. Share your passion with the person as this will open you up to them and will often make them feel inspired and energized.

Actions to help you connect

For some of us, we know we need connection with other people, but we also feel confused about how to do it. For this reason, I'm going to give some suggestions for how to establish a connection with someone that you meet.

Obviously, the prerequisite to any of these steps is that you don't isolate yourself. For a great many of us, we are lonely even when we are with other people. This is the deep existential loneliness that I've been talking about throughout this book. But sometimes, when we are lonely and we take a good look at our lives, we find that we are physically isolated as well.

For example, it's going to be impossible to fully connect with someone if you spend every day locked up in your apartment or only maintain relationships over the Internet. For this reason, I want you to close your eyes and pretend to be a fly on the wall that is watching you on an average day. Watch your moves hour to hour. Can you see any discrepancy between your intentions and your actions? Perhaps you say that you want to be connected with someone but you wake up, go to work, sit in a cubicle, then come home and watch TV until you go to bed, alone. Obviously, this leaves no room whatsoever to connect with other people.

When you do go out socially or even shopping or walking in the park, most of us spend our time waiting for someone to connect with us. The truth is we're all so terrified of rejection but if we want connection, we've got to realize that sometimes we're going to have to be the one to initiate contact. We must get over this tendency to be passive about connection and be willing to go to the places where people we want to connect with live and we need to initiate contact with them. Remember, if everyone is insecure and afraid to be the one to speak first, it might as well be you.

Once you do find someone to try to connect with, be prepared to give that person your undivided, unconditional, focused presence. When you give someone your full attention, you give them the full presence of your consciousness. Don't confuse this with aggression. I'm not saying to force yourself on someone but to gift your energy to someone.

To do this, you will want to use open body language. For example, smile at

them, look them in the eye, uncross your arms and legs, and make sure your chest is facing them rather than turned to the side. Your attention and your body needs to say, “I’m open to you and interested in you. I’d like to connect, to receive and to be received.”

The often transactional nature of connection

Some people are hypersensitive to feeling like the only reason people want to connect with them is to get something from them or to use the information they get about them, against them. For example, many attractive women have this attitude because the only reason men seem to connect with them is because the men want to get sex.

For this reason, it’s important to intuitively feel into what wounds a person might have so you can try to connect with them by perhaps leading off on a different foot. For example, if you are a man who wants to connect with a beautiful woman but you intuitively feel that her wound might be that people only want to connect with her to have sex or status because of her looks, starting off by complimenting her looks is probably a bad idea.

USING THE “ENERGY” OF CONNECTION

If you want to meet more people, try to exude warmth and positive energy to make them feel comfortable and welcomed by you. Here is a good technique for doing this. As you are walking down the street and you pass complete strangers, you have to specifically look for something in the person that you like, appreciate or love about them. Mentally say, “I love you for *[fill in the blank with whatever you like about them]*.” Then mentally say why you love that about them. And finish it with, “I love you for that.”

As you say these words in your head, imagine sending that energy out of your heart or chest toward them, as if by an invisible signal to their hearts. For example, if you pass a woman you might say, “I love you for the way you are holding your child’s hands because I can see you are nurturing and loving and it’s helping him to feel secure. I love you for that.”

You can do this exercise like a silent practice as you walk around the town with as many people as you can – men, women, any age. But it’s better to do it with five people in a really focused way where you’re really

better to do it with five people in a really focused way where you're really feeling the love and appreciation for them rather than for a dozen where you're not really focused and only mildly feel the appreciation for them. A bonus is that you are causing a ripple in the collective consciousness. You'll be blown away at how different your interactions with people will be.

Try instead to project a different energy when you approach her if you genuinely want to connect with her. Remember, the fact that some people instantly distrust someone's motives for wanting to connect with them isn't your fault. It's just a connection wound that the person is carrying with them. They are trying to stay safe from experiencing the same pain relative to connection that they have experienced before.

Become interested in them. Aim for intimacy, not just surface stuff. Practise seeing into the other person, feeling into them and understanding them so that you can have a shared experience. You will get more friends by becoming interested in other people than you ever will by trying to get people to be interested in you. Set out to learn about them.

If it helps you focus, you can even pretend that you are mentally designing a manual for them. The energy you want to give off is that you really want to know them and relate to them, not that you want *to get something* from them.

How to find common ground

Seeking out common ground helps you build instant rapport and it's also a great skill when you are trying to socially connect with someone who has very different viewpoints and feelings than you do. For example, let's say one of you is studying for a degree in accounting and the other is studying archaeology but you both like climbing. Climbing is your common ground. Talk about climbing.

Pay very close attention to what someone says and does in order to recognize the common ground between you. When you are seeking to really understand them and develop a connection with them, ask them questions.

When you are asking questions, ask deep questions that reveal the inner world of the person and their values, likes, dislikes, beliefs, opinions, dreams and struggles. A relationship is based on sharing, so be prepared to answer the very same questions you ask.

When they answer your questions, and tell you about themselves, receive them without trying to fix them or change their minds. Listen to them with your eyes, ears, mind and heart. A huge part of connecting is providing a safe space to

connect. This is the responsibility of both people. People may be afraid to share the truth of themselves with you because they are afraid of the consequences and, so let there be no consequences.

Even if you disagree with their opinion, treat it as important and remind yourself that there is a valid reason they feel that way. Antagonism kills connection. And keep in mind that their emotions need to be received more than anything else.

As you talk with them, relate to them. Empathize, be compassionate and find ways to help them to feel validated. If you really want to connect with someone, you have to be willing to feel what they feel. We must be willing to step into their shoes completely. It may help to literally imagine experiencing their perspective, in first-person perspective, so as to relate to them completely.

Pay special attention to the fact that sometimes, we think we're relating when we're really just using their story as an excuse to tell our own. Don't be more interested in them hearing your story than we are about hearing from them. That will just make them feel insignificant. If you want them to care about you, you've got to genuinely care about them.

Steer completely clear of saying you don't understand their viewpoint. Some well-meaning people do this and it completely kills the connection, making the other person feel all alone. Here's an example. Someone expresses that they never knew their family. You jump in and say, "Oh how sad, I loved my family, they were awesome. I just don't know where I'd be without them, especially my mom." You've just created separation not connection. You've just made them feel alone in their opinion or feeling. If they ask you about your family, you can be honest without rubbing salt into their wounds or creating a feeling of separation.

A lot of us only seize the opportunity to connect with someone when we can help them. This becomes our common ground for connecting, and is often because our self-esteem is so low that we think the only time someone will accept to be connected to us is if we can do something for them. This is a real slippery slope.

The best idea is to be helpful where you can be helpful. But before you help someone, simply ask yourself these questions: "By helping them, am I expecting something like loyalty or gratitude or connection in return?" and "By helping in this way am I sending the message that they need to be fixed or that something about them is not OK?" If you know these things are not the case then go ahead and help.

A general rule of thumb is that a connection that is formed from a platform of subconscious manipulation (getting what we want, like connection, in a roundabout way) always ends up magnifying the very thing we were trying to

roundabout way) always ends up magnifying the very thing we were trying to manipulate to avoid. For example, if I establish connection with someone to feel like a good person and avoid my guilt, that relationship is doomed to wind up magnifying the feeling that I am a terrible person and make me feel guilty.

Likewise, if I establish a connection with someone by rescuing them because I feel like I have no value in and of myself, I can only feel my value to that person in that roundabout way, that relationship is doomed to wind up making me feel totally worthless and like I have no value to others.

When we become aware of and take care of the separation, shame and fear that is preventing us from connecting and then take these steps to connect, we have gone from a state of loneliness to a state of connection. Then, all that is left for us to do is to focus on keeping that connection.

Part V

Keeping Connection

*All life is the fragmenting
of one collective soul.
All life is the finding
of one's split soul.
To taste each other's lips,
to feel each other's hips.
To rage against each other
so that we feel the agony of our separation.
We are a mosaic.
We are the broken fragments of a masterpiece
that shattered.
It is only by finding our split soul
that we can re-unite the tesserae.
It is only by finding our split soul
that we will see the masterpiece consciously
for the very first time.
The warmth of love,
like an adhesive,
causes us to commit to each fragment
of our collective soul...
To commit because each fragment
is part of ourselves.*

Keeping Connection by Teal Swan

Keeping Connection

One of the most terrifying things about keeping connection is that it takes two. It takes both sides of the link being committed to keeping it strong over time. It's impossible to keep a link with something or someone that doesn't want to be linked to us. We also can't keep a link with someone who only wants to keep that link with us in theory, but who does not commit any of themselves to keeping the relationship healthy.

To use a metaphor to illustrate this: imagine that two people are standing on either side of a child's paddling pool. A strong connection is only formed when both people decide with their own free will to commit to getting into that pool with each other. A connection won't happen if one person doesn't get in and the other one does.

A strong connection cannot be formed if one pushes the other out of the pool or tries to force the other person to get in. A strong connection cannot be formed if either person keeps getting into the pool then getting out again. Both must commit to getting into the pool. This is the case with any relationship we have, and if we are honest with ourselves it's the only type of relationship we actually want.

To put this in relationship terms, it means that if you are pulling at people with your energy, words or actions to try to get them to be with you, you've got to stop. You've got to be brave enough to let go of them totally, and by doing so you give back to them the responsibility for deciding to commit and link with you. This doesn't mean you push them away or withdraw. It just means that you drop the tension you are using. The reality is that they might not take responsibility for the link and they might walk away. And that is going to hurt like hell. But in the long run it will hurt less than trying to pull something in for years, like a fish on a hook. It's just not worth it and you are worth far more.

If we can accept this truth, we can then move on to the heart of this section, which is about how to keep the connections that you have established strong and everlasting.

How to be demonstrative with your loved ones

Once you have established a connection with someone, regardless of whether

that connection is with a partner, a friend or a child etc., be generous and demonstrative with your care. In other words, *demonstrate* that you know and care about that person. Be thoughtful and mindful of your friend or loved one, and consciously extend that energy toward them. Remember important dates and things about them that are important so that they can see that you have really taken them to heart. And you will want to repair conflicts as soon as possible if they may occur.

Make this person a priority in your life. It's difficult to connect with someone when the message you keep giving them is, "You're not important to me". So make sure the people you want to connect with are actually important and are actually a priority to you.

Express love to the other person in ways that are appropriate for them. For example, by physically touching them, if they are receptive to touch, verbally by complimenting them or affirming them, and by doing something for them like the dishes or offering to help them with something.

You can express love through gifts, which lets them know that you care enough to think of them and secure a token of your affection for them. And you can express your love to them through giving them quality time that is focused just on them without distraction, doing something you both love to do, such as having a deep conversation, hiking or going out to eat. And remember to make sure that your expressions of love are done for the right reasons, because you genuinely want them to feel good, not because you want anything in return from them.

Another positive way to build lasting connections is through appreciation. Whenever you recognize the positive in someone or something, it creates a pull between us instead of a push away. It does the opposite of separate us from that thing. It brings it closer. Therefore, if we are looking to establish a secure connection with someone, we need to practise appreciating them.

Anything positive at all that relates to the other person counts as appreciation. We can thank them for who they are and for what they contribute to our life. Our relationships usually feel better when we do this. A good practice to have is to write a list every so often of the other person's positive and good qualities and the ways they have contributed to our life. Watch what happens in your body in response to having this kind of focus toward the other person. You'll feel resistance melt away, you'll be more open to them and you will feel more closely connected.

It is really important that you never ignore their presence. There are very few things that are more emotionally hurtful than being treated like you don't exist. Even if you're angry at the moment, it's no reason to give the cold shoulder to

the person who loves you. Don't physically or emotionally withdraw from them either, especially during a conflict. People who are afraid of intimacy and connection tend to cope with those feelings by becoming an island. They may become emotionally unavailable and disconnect from the other person as a defensive move because of the fear they feel.

Where is your energy actually going?

I want you to consider that the minute you enter into a relationship or the minute that connection is established, there are now three entities: you, the other person and the relationship. Notice that the relationship is the third entity. At any given time, your energy can be given to yourself, your partner or the relationship. Likewise, at any given time, their energy could be focused on themselves, you or the relationship. The energy that is committed will feed whatever it's given to.

Sometimes, energy focused toward the relationship bleeds over and feeds one of the people. This is especially true if energy focused at the relationship takes pressure off one of the people. But more often than not, *it doesn't*. For example, when we go to relationship therapy or to a couple's workshop this strengthens the relationship but it does not feed energy to either person. Instead, both people are feeding their energy into the third entity, which is the relationship itself.

One of the biggest problems in relationships is that one person isn't getting fed with enough loving energy. This happens for one of three reasons:

1. We are putting lots of energy into the relationship but not into the other person we are in a relationship with.
2. We are putting lots of energy toward things we think are for the other person, but they don't feel loved that way. Essentially there is a miscommunication about what feeds the other person with love.
3. One person in the relationship is genuinely uninterested in giving and is only interested in taking from the relationship and from the other person. This is a parasitic relationship, not a symbiotic one.

Fortunately it's rare that we are with someone who is genuinely only interested in taking from us in a relationship. More often than not, if someone seems self-centred or the relationship seems like a one-way relationship, it's because they

are either feeding the relationship and not the other person or because they are feeding the other person in ways that don't actually make the other person feel loved.

CREATE LOVE LISTS THAT FEED EACH OTHER

What needs to happen to sustain your relationship is a two-part process. First, each person writes a list of the things that make them feel loved and fed with energy from the other person. Each of you makes your list as long as possible first and then score each item from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most important and the things that make you feel the most loved and emotionally and energetically fed by the other person. Once you've done that ranking, arrange them in order from the most important to the least, so that your partner or friend has a reference for the things that will make the most impact.

Please note you should write your list in the third person. Here are some examples of statements a woman might write, but notice that she writes it in the voice that her partner would read out loud from his perspective. This will help the other person to really get the message of what their partner needs in order to be loved.

10	Buy her gifts that say, "I care" for no reason other than that I love her.
10	Take her on a surprise date.
10	Put effort into vacations/family days/community gatherings and creating traditions that will enhance the family dynamic and also take some of the pressure off of her by helping to drive "Togetherness Ship".
10	Help her through her anxiety in the morning and help her process issues she has with other people.
10	Help her set up and devise ways to create income.
10	Be a gentleman by opening doors, carrying things, walking on the street side of a walkway, helping her on with her jacket, leading

	her with your hand and being attuned to her “state” and needs.
10	Make sure she is protected. Shield her from unnecessary problems and lock up the house at night. Make sure she’s safe wherever she goes and defend her.
10	Become an expert on her. Really put effort into understanding her and her inner world.
9	Take her to the ballet or opera.
9	Act excited and enthusiastic about things she creates or does or is passionate about. Mean it when I do it. Give her an “I really care” reaction.
7	Massages.
8	Take her to a restaurant... but choose one specifically for her, not just “Let’s go get food.”
8	Tell her she’s beautiful and go into detail.
8	Keep my beard shaved so the stubble doesn’t hurt her face.
8	If I know she is struggling with something or is wanting to get into something, put the initiative forward to make it happen for her to get help with it or to do it.
7	Take her hiking.
7	Take her to the movies to see a movie I know she would like.
7	Make her food I think she’d like or make her tea or some other drink that she’d like.
7	Rub her shoulders and neck.
7	Post something nice about her on Facebook.
7	Hug her from behind.
6	Plan a romantic getaway where the things that are done on that getaway are for her.
6	Do something to make the house even more beautiful for her . . . like a project I know she would love.

5	Take her shopping using my money wherever she wants or to a place I know she'll like.
5	Send her a love note.
5	Take her to dance class.
4	Take her to do art somewhere.
3	Make her a rose petal bath.
3	Pack a picnic and take her somewhere to eat it.
3	Send her sweet texts during the day.
3	Drive her places that she needs to go so she feels "supported" and not on her own.
2	Read books and watch TV shows on being a better partner. Take those types of self-improvement actions that benefit her and our relationship.

Once you and your partner, friend, or family member each complete your own list, you are ready for the second step in this process which is to give your list to the other person and have them give you theirs. Once you've both read them over, have a conversation about each item on the list so that you can both arrive at clarity about it.

From there, proceed to talk further about the ways that you think each of you gives to the other person. What do you do that you think you are doing for the other person? Pretend the other person isn't even there and you're telling a neutral third party the things you do for them. With each item, you get to tell each other whether you actually think that particular action is giving to you or not.

Sorting out who is giving to whom?

When we are trying to sort out where our energy is actually going in an intimate relationship, we are all too often misguided. One great example is sex. If you wish to stay connected to your partner, sex is probably going to be important. For most women, as was mentioned before, sex can be a transaction, a way of getting security. They give a guy sex, which feeds him, and this is how the woman hopes to gain relationship security.

In this case then, pretend a man says, “I give to you by making love to you.” Realize that for most women, this would not make her feel nourished because it’s transactional. She is in fact *giving first* in order to get. We can debate the health of that state of being at another time perhaps, but for the sake of this example a man could feel like he’s *giving* to her when in fact she feels like she is *giving* to him. By being very clear on each of your preferences and priorities relative to receiving you have a much better chance of sustaining the relationship.

You can see how this confusion can come up with other actions in the relationship as well. Too often, someone will think they are doing something primarily for the other person, but their partner just sees it as self-serving on the part of their partner. Consider this example. I worked with a couple that went running in the morning together. The husband listed going running with her as something that he *did for her* and the wife listed it as something she *does for him*. On those same lists, the husband listed going to art fairs as something he *does for her* and she listed it as something she *does for him*.

By the end of the day, each person felt depleted by the other and it was because they were spending energy toward the other person in ways that the other person didn’t actually want it. When they figured this out, they stopped running together and they agreed that if they went to art fairs, they would go with the understanding that it would be mutually interesting, not that they were giving to the other.

In this way, they were able to change the focus to things they could specifically do for each other that would have maximum impact. They are both feeling more validated, heard, loved, felt and understood, plus their relationship has never been better. All three entities are being fed, and it’s actually taking less effort to do so.

Sometimes we can do things for the other person or for the relationship that we like to do as well, so it can be something that feeds all three entities. But I’m going to teach you a trick. *Doing something for the other person specifically* in a relationship always feeds the relationship in the same way that feeding a mother always feeds the baby in her womb. People who are being nourished by someone else will feel good about the relationship. It makes the relationship more secure and sustainable. So the best way to create a good relationship is to feed your friend or partner with energy and do loving things *for them* specifically and in a direct way, not an indirect way.

Why indirect loving acts are not nearly as powerful

Here is an example of an indirect way of loving someone that is commonly seen

here is an example of an indirect way of loving someone that is commonly seen in men and their families. A man may focus all of his energy on his career, saying that he is earning money for his family specifically. He feels that this is how he shows them love, but they don't feel loved in this way. After all, his financial success and ability to provide for his family is something that means a lot to him too and he gains prestige and financial security himself through his job.

So his dedication to his work can seem more *self-serving* than *other-serving* to his family. It is an indirect way of loving them that isn't working for them. For his spouse and children, the top of their priority list of ways to be loved is often quite different. When they express what they need and want, he will perhaps discover that a more direct way of showing love to his family would be to set up at least one day a week where his attention is entirely on them without his phone.

The main lesson here, of course, is that we must consider that the way we are giving to someone is not always the way they receive. We have to strategize different ways to do things for the other person and organize our lives so that what we are giving to our partner is something that they value and wish to receive. Sometimes this changes day to day so we also need to be tuned in enough to feel this shift.

For example, I may have listed being taken to a movie as a way I feel the most loved. But if I get sick, I will feel more loved if my partner brings me hot soup and watches a movie on the couch with me. In fact, in this scenario, if he insisted on taking me to the movie theatre, it would make me feel *unloved* because it would mean he isn't connected with me enough to feel how badly I feel.

This brings me to another point. Don't make it a tit-for-tat type of relationship. That isn't what this is about. A relationship is made good and sustainable through mutual nourishment. You can and will do things for yourself throughout the day. But if you wake up with the attitude of, "What can I do to make my partner or friend feel loved and nourished today?" and they wake up with the same feeling about you, you'll both be feeding each other. Some days more of the focus and nourishment might go toward one of you, but another day more of the focus and nourishment goes to the other. But no one will be starving and both of you will feel good about the relationship.

Once you have clarity about your needs and wants, every time you go to do something together, you'll know it's nourishing. You'll begin to consciously see where your energy is flowing so as to create the most harmonious and mutually nourishing relationship possible.

With your lists in hand and your new-found mutual understanding, you can

With your lists in hand and your new-found mutual understanding, you can now use your energy in positive ways, to support each other, to laugh, play and do things you both enjoy together. Doing this consistently will form a bond between you in the same way that going through tough times together has the power to bond you with another person.

In essence you are prioritizing things that feel good. We know that things that feel bad are an inevitable part of life and relationships, but building your connection based on things that feel good ensures that conflict and struggle are not the undertone of the relationship itself.

Try each day to encourage the other person. When we get encouragement, we no longer feel alone. We no longer feel like it's us against the world. Encouragement is the opposite of criticism and discouragement, and it is powerful because it also allows other people to be emotionally safe enough to share their dreams and desires with us. And you already know that dreams and desires are a vulnerable part of our core being. It's a gift to be handed these vulnerable aspects and to help a person nourish, nurture and support them.

Practise the many ways to communicate

By engaging in a relationship, whether it's a friendship, a family dynamic or romantic, we commit to connection. Communication is a huge part of connection and it takes place in many ways, not just verbally. In fact, most of our communication takes place through our body language. Therefore, we need to be aware of what we are communicating and communicate deliberately.

To communicate effectively, we cannot suppress our emotions and try to avoid, deny, dismiss or numb them through distraction. We need to be willing to acknowledge our own emotional and personal truth and then communicate it in healthy ways to the other person.

If you are confused about how to do this, a helpful tip is to take the thoughts you are having and imagine bringing them down to your heart space, so you literally imagine bringing them down to your chest area and then speaking from there. This technique is called "speaking from the heart". When we do this, we tend to be more willingly vulnerable and thus more authentic and less defensive or attacking in our communication style.

You need to practise putting your feelings into words. There is almost nothing worse for a relationship than remaining silent and it's a recipe for resentment and disconnection. When you don't tell someone how you're feeling, it creates a canyon between you and another person. They can feel when you are emotionally upset. If you are not talking or denying the way you feel they know very well that you are emotionally upset, it makes your partner feel crazy and

confused.

Express your wants, needs and expectations clearly in your relationship. It's not fair to keep the other person guessing or expect them to read your mind. It's also important to take time to understand the other person's wants, needs and expectations. Ask for what you want and need, and encourage them to do the same. Then commit to following through and putting forth energy to meet those needs and wants.

Learning how to follow through

So now you that you have established a connection and understand your partner's needs and priorities, the next thing is to follow through. If you make promises, follow through. If you say you're going to do something, do it. Make good your words. Don't blow it off or forget about it. That will systematically destroy trust in the relationship. And trust is a big part of emotional safety in a relationship.

Mistakes in a relationship are inevitable but part of following through is about admitting them and committing to change our behaviour. Continuing to apologize over and over instead of changing your behaviour sends the message that you don't actually care about how the other person feels as much as you care about getting them off your back. But when we follow through in a relationship, especially when we correct a behaviour that is threatening the connection, we are taking responsibility for the connection. A strong connection is about both people taking responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the connection.

Often when we can't follow through in our connection with others, it's because we are not being clear about and committing to our priorities. If you want a relationship to feel good emotionally, you are going to have to value it enough to prioritize it. There is no such thing as a right priority or a wrong one. But if your work or hobbies are a higher priority than your relationships, chances are your relationships will suffer.

By choosing your work or hobbies over them, you make the other person feel unloved and insignificant. They will feel like it's unsafe to connect emotionally with you. When you are facing a conflict of interest between one thing and another, you'll have to consciously decide on your priority. In the healthiest relationships, the health of the relationship and the way your partner feels should be your *top* priorities.

I realize of course that this takes commitment and that is a terrifying thing for many people. But if we are going for a secure connection, we have to commit to it. A great many people who want connection are nonetheless terrified of

to it. A great many people who want connection are nonetheless terrified of commitment. The fear of commitment is no joke. It's a perpetual state of avoidance. Whether it's the hesitation to commit to a relationship, a career, a decision or whatever else, it's like trying to drive through life with the parking brake on.

Commitment is a state of dedication. But we can simplify commitment in this way: to commit to something is to give your energy to it. The more committed you are to something, the more of your energy and therefore yourself you put into that thing.

Understanding the fear of commitment

If you struggle with the fear of commitment, recognize that while commitment phobia is real, it's also true that there is no such thing as *genuine* commitment phobia. Here's why. You cannot actually live one second of the day where you are not committed to something. Your energy is going into something at all moments of the day. The question is, *into what?*

For example, the person who isn't committing to a relationship out of fear has already chosen to be fully committed to freedom. The person who is procrastinating has already chosen to be fully committed to distraction. The person who refuses to make a decision has already committed to being irresponsible or shall we say they want whatever perks come with not being responsible.

So, any time you find yourself not committing to something or following through, it means there is something else you are much more committed to, often on the opposite end of the scale. Take time to discover what these subconscious commitments are so you can realize *what* you are really committed to in life. Then decide if those things are what you actually want to be consciously be committed to. In other words, ask yourself: "What do I really want to be committed to?" Take notice that this is a very different question than, "What *should* I want to be committed to?"

Once that is clear, in order to really change something, you have to see that there is a need or reason to change. Look at commitment under this light: "What does it do to yourself and what does it do to others when you don't commit?" For example, you will likely see opportunities you have lost by not acting on them. You can see the rejection other people feel. You may see the success that you have *not* achieved because where you were unwilling to give it your all, someone else was. If you need to, make a list so you can really become conscious of what this has done, is doing and could do to your life.

Another important approach is to love the aspect of you, and by this I mean

one of your Inner Twins, who is afraid of committing. Focus with compassion and love toward that inner aspect of yourself who is so terrified from past disappointments and who was controlled; all that Inner Twin wants is to stay safe. Approach this aspect of yourself with love and explain how your desire to commit is because you want the best for it and for yourself in the long run. Offer understanding and healing to yourself and this will cause an inner transformation.

If you are afraid of commitment, you may decide that it's too hard to commit to the whole relationship, but maybe you can commit to something smaller within the context of it. For example, you may decide to commit to communicating with the other person every day. Breaking things down into smaller steps is a very good start.

It will also help to deliberately shift your focus to the positives about any given thing that you want to commit to, but are afraid to. Love is the opposite of fear. So, if you're afraid of your partner, what do you love about them? If you're afraid of the job, what do you love about it? If you fear making the decision, what do you love about the decision or about making decisions in general?

Cutting the invisible strings

To love is to take something as part of yourself. Love naturally inspires us to meet someone else's needs because we feel that our need is to meet their needs. But for many of us, we ended up in households with people who did not experience genuine love, so they did not give us genuine love and as a result they could not remain connected with us through love. Instead, they had to forge connection with us in the same way that a spider creates its web to catch flies.

People who were not loved feel unlovable for who they are. They live in a permanent internal atmosphere of shame. Love becomes transactional and so does connection. In fact, the meeting of all our needs becomes transactional. This is how it happened.

Within childhood, each time a child accepts something that is offered or allows one of their needs to be met by their parent, an invisible string is attached to them and then another and then another. This is present in any dysfunctional home but this type of transactional love – and the twisted web it weaves to trap people – has served to become a human epidemic. These types of relationships are based on manipulation.

If you were raised in a transactional way, you believe no other way exists to be in a relationship. You see everything subconsciously as if it's a business deal. All business deals have strings attached, but the problem here is that the strings are invisible.

are invisible.

Those of you who want to believe that the spider's web analogy is extreme, think again. On an energetic level this is the actual relationship that is occurring. The spider either simply catches the fly because it flew into the web, which is like the child just being innocently born into the scenario, or finds a way to lure the fly in to the web, in the same way that a person offers something to someone else.

But in either scenario, there are strings attached. Either way, the fly gets stuck in the web. The person is trapped in the same way the fly is trapped. Then the spider feeds off of the fly. This is the phase where the person gets his or her needs met through the forced transaction. They are taking what they believe they deserve, but that the person didn't agree to *giving* as an exchange in the first place.

For example, a mother has a child and decides that she needs her child to be a professional athlete so she can have status and significance through that child. The transaction is that the mother will give her hours to drive the child to classes and spend money so that the child can become that thing.

But notice that the child never agreed to this deal. If the child tries to express their free will and perhaps discontinue the rigorous training regime, the mother will remind the child they are trapped in debt, by saying, "I gave up all this money and time for you so you could be a professional athlete." The guilt makes the child continue and fulfil their mother's dream. The mother feeds on the status and significance through the child. She is energetically eating her child that was trapped in her web by virtue of being born to her and having any needs at all.

The better way

So what would a family look like that didn't tie up their child with invisible strings? Under a more positive parenting model, child rearing would be done with love, where the parent accepts that the child did not ask to be born. They are not doing the child a favour, and so the child owes them nothing. The child is a gift that has been given to them, but one who has been encoded with their own desires, needs, essence and purpose.

The universe has trusted the parent with this incredible gift knowing that the partnership between them will lead to the expansion and spiritual progression of both parent and child. This child is meant to be seen as a part of the parent. This love will naturally inspire the parent to demonstrate his or her love to the child through affection, gifts, quality time, acts of service and appreciation.

When these demonstrations of love are done, they are not done in order to

get anything back. The parent does them only because it feels good to demonstrate love to something that you love. You don't need incentives because doing something lovely for them feels like doing something lovely for yourself when you have taken something as part of yourself.

All beings, including children, naturally demonstrate love back when they feel reciprocal love, which a child always will. The child didn't have to do anything for the parent or be anything for the parent to feel this love and demonstrate it to them. This is the kind of love you wanted with your parent. This is the kind of loving relationship you still want, the kind with no invisible strings attached.

Now you can see how awesome this would be to have it in your daily life today. When someone else's happiness is experienced as *your happiness*, you know you have found unconditional love. It's one of the most expansive feelings on the planet. It's pure ecstasy. And all beings on the Earth deserve to be on both sides of that ecstasy.

Sorting out expectations and assumptions

Creating a close and loving relationship with no invisible strings attached *begins with you*. Start by becoming aware of the hidden, subconscious expectations you hold. Here's a way to do that. Imagine if you will that a man and a woman go on a date to the movies. They pay separately for the movie tickets and then walk straight past the concession stand and into the theatre and sit down. The woman is feeling *put off* by the man. She is feeling perturbed. What she is really upset about is that this man did not meet her expectations. Her expectation was that the man would pay for the movie ticket and also to offer to buy her popcorn. Not only did she *expect* something that was not communicated to the man, she *assumed* that this would be the expectation he has for himself when he invites a woman out on a date. But how could he have known all this? *They just met*. He has his own full set of expectations she knows nothing about either.

We all have expectations. To expect something is to believe with confidence that something will happen. Expectation often implies the attitude that something should happen or should be a certain way. To assume is to take something for granted or to suppose something is true, even without having any proof. Looking at these definitions, can you see how often we do this in our relationships?

All of us have expectations in relationships. These expectations may be conscious or subconscious but most are the latter. This means you may know what some of your expectations are and there are others you're not even

consciously aware of. And some of these may be healthy and some of them might not be, but they were mostly set up by our previous experiences and the culture we were brought up in.

Any time someone doesn't meet an expectation in a relationship, you will feel bad. So become conscious of your expectations and get clear about the assumptions you are making. Imagine that every person in your life is a fresh and new experience. Assume that coming from their background, they will have totally different expectations and assumptions than you do or that anyone you've met in the past does. You'll both need to make a conscious effort to discover each other's expectations in the relationship if you want it to work.

Belonging is a basic human need

Some of us are lucky. We are born into a family or a society where we feel like we belong. For others of us, because of our terrible self-concept that is the result of shame, we feel the only places we belong are places we wish we didn't belong. And for others of us, our lack of belonging plagues our life and we feel fundamentally disconnected. We don't feel like we belong anywhere, with anything or with anyone.

Belonging is one of the highest frequency vibrations in this universe. In fact, we could consider oneness, love and belonging to all be different "tones" of the same hue. But it's not simply that. It's also a basic human need. So many of us in the spiritual field believe it's not only possible, but also good, to transcend human needs. We use our spiritual practice to work against our own biology instead of with it.

But it's not possible to *un-need* something. It's only possible to meet that need in a different way. We need to feel as if we belong in order to feel ourselves connected with anything in our lives instead of completely alone. As human beings, we are social creatures and if we become physically isolated, we die in a similar way that a plant dies if it's not given water. But the sad thing is, without a sense of connection and belonging, a person can feel like they are starving to death even if surrounded by other people.

To belong is to be a part of something. But true belonging is to be so much a part of something that you aren't able to *not be* a part of it, even if you wanted to. For example, to belong to a club, you simply have to be a member of that club. But that is not true belonging because you can decide not to be a member of that club and then you won't belong to it anymore.

With true belonging, it doesn't matter if you leave or if you don't want to be a part of it anymore, you are still here, part of the universal oneness. The best

explanation I can give you is to see that you are a human. It doesn't matter if you don't want to be a human, *you are*. You belong to the human race and the only way out of belonging to it is death.

Here's another way to fully grasp this. Take a piece of paper and imagine that part of that paper doesn't want to be part of the paper. Rip it in half. Place the two halves of the paper on opposite sides of a table. They are separate now. But did you manage to make the paper not *be paper*? No. There was no way to take the paper out of the paper. There is security in that level of connection because you cannot break the connection.

In true belonging, you are held and contained by something. It's the most positive expression of ownership in existence. In this kind of ownership, all parts are indivisible from the whole so you cannot do harm to *a part* without harming the whole. For example, if someone belongs to you and with you, you take him or her as being part of yourself. At that point you cannot hurt them without hurting yourself.

Understanding shadow belonging

As you know by now, to love something is to take something as part of yourself. This is where belonging and love go hand-in-hand. If you take something as part of yourself, it belongs to you. One of the problems on the planet is that we get into relationships that are absent of belonging. Our relationships are entirely conditional. We don't ever take the other person in as part of ourselves and so we cannot consider their best interests as a part of our own. The opposite of belonging is exclusion, isolation and being ostracized.

The reason some people have such an aversion to belonging is because they haven't actually experienced belonging before. There is a saying in the Christian religions that the "devil's greatest disguise is to pretend that he is Christ". Ironically, it's so true of many things that the most opposite vibration of something you want can often come to you disguised as the very thing you want the most. In other words, the worst villain can come disguised as the victim.

The same is true of *belonging*. Isolation and non-belonging will often come disguised as belonging, and we can call it *shadow belonging*, and it's this type that gives *belonging* a bad reputation. The best example of *shadow belonging* is cult groups. In these groups, to belong is to no longer be free but to be owned like an object. In these groups, the wellbeing of the individual members, or lack thereof, does not impact the overall group. In fact, the detriment of the individual is what most often benefits the group.

In these groups, belonging is determined by exclusion and defined by who

doesn't belong versus who does. A main consequence of not conforming to the group is that you will be ostracized. Looking at this *shadow belonging*, which isn't actually true belonging, you can see that many religions, can category.

A common form of *shadow belonging* that happens in families occurs when a parent demonstrates narcissistic personality traits. In this family, one child who doesn't please this parent is typically ostracized from the family's sense of belonging. We call this child the black sheep or the scapegoat. And another child learns that pleasing the parent means erasing their own best interests and even letting go of their entire identity to become what the parent wants them to be; it's the only way to belong in that family without being punished or ostracized. We call this child the favoured or the golden child.

For the ostracized child, their life will be a never-ending search to try to find belonging. For the favoured child, belonging was and continues to be synonymous with a loss of self and self-betrayal. In reality, neither child had belonging, because belonging was completely conditional upon pleasing the parent. One child was offered no belonging and the other was offered *shadow belonging*.

I am going to say something that is going to change the way you look at belonging entirely. If it's possible for not belonging to be a consequence of separating in any way from something, there was *no belonging* in the first place. For example, if it's possible for being ostracized to be a consequence of your religion, there was no belonging inherent in that religion in the first place.

And if it's possible to not belong to or to be *dis-included* from your family if there is conflict or non-conformity, there was no belonging inherent in that family to begin with. With true belonging, you don't have to do anything in order to belong or to keep your current belonging.

We could say that you truly belong to Source or God because you are a part of it. You are indivisible from it. You can't *un-belong* to it. No matter what you do or don't do, not belonging is not possible. But what we need in our physical lives is to have that experience of belonging to be embodied in a way within our relationship with others.

How to cultivate a sense of belonging

One way to culture a sense of belonging is to look for your similarities with the things you want to belong to. When we are in pain as a result of not belonging, we are hyper-vigilant about differences that could lead to us being ostracized again. As a result, so much of our focus is placed on how we are different and on how we don't fit in.

What we need to do instead is to look at everything through the lens of "how

what we need to do instead is to look at everything through the lens of “how am I the same as this thing?” For example, if I want to belong to my partner, how am I the same as this person? In the beginning of our relationships, we tend to feel intense belonging with them. As time goes on, we start to lose this sense. This is because when we meet someone we are interested in, we notice all the similarities between them and us. These similarities are how we establish a connection.

For example, we notice someone loves horses and we love them too. This gives us that sense of belonging. But as the relationship goes on, we start to notice our differences instead and this makes us feel more separate and less connected and that sense of belonging starts to fade. From this point on, we have to *actively work* at belonging by putting energy into recognizing and capitalizing on our similarities. This will help us create a life together where our differences are not a threat to the connection between us.

Another way to cultivate belonging is *acceptance*, which is the opposite of denial and avoidance. What does it mean to accept something? To accept is to recognize something as valid or correct. Doing this makes your being consent to receiving and digesting something as truth instead of fighting to not acknowledge it and not take it in.

To accept someone is to recognize any part of them as valid, regardless of whether or not you have the same opinion, feeling or perspective. For example, we may have a child that feels like they belong with us but because they are gay, we find that aspect of them hard to accept. Our natural tendency might be push it away and fight against it, but I encourage you to find a way to accept and acknowledge the reality, which is that they are gay. You can then begin to see how. Given their life experience, feelings and perspective, it’s perfectly valid that they identify as gay.

What you will find is that validating others builds a sense of belonging. In fact, one could say that validating others is how *they know that we accept them*. By validating them and accepting them, you are saying that their internal experience is understandable to you.

The truth is that a human being cannot exist as an island. We cannot thrive alone. We don’t want to be excluded. The truth is, we desperately want to belong to each other. And the highest truth of all is that in a universe where oneness is the highest truth of all, there is nothing in this universe that we don’t belong with and there is nothing in existence that doesn’t belong with us.

Repairing ruptures as soon as they happen

When two different people try to connect, each comes in with different needs,

wants, perspectives, feelings and past experiences. The likelihood of being on the same page as one another all the time is very slim at best. This means that in any relationship, ruptures can and will occur. It's inevitable. By rupture in a relationship, I mean a time when the connection between you lessens or is broken, and you feel the pain of disconnection.

We can experience ruptures in any relationship. A minor rupture might be something as small as a partner deciding to get out of bed and go for a run alone when what we really needed and wanted was to be held by them. Or we can experience major ruptures, like a break-up.

Our on-going security of connection depends not only on people seeing, feeling, hearing and understanding us but also having them *continue* to do so. If you feel a rupture, you need to *commit* to re-establishing that connection. For secure connection to be re-established, repairing the link has to be a priority commitment that both people are willing to work at. It will take two of you to get back on the same page.

On a vibrational level, this is what is going on. As spiritual energy incarnated into a physical human perspective in this particular time-space reality, we must be a vibrational match to the people that we come together with in our lives. This is particularly true of our primary partnership, which is usually an exclusive romantic one.

As we progress through life, desires arise within us and those desires call us forward into our expansion. This forward progression is for the good but it also causes change. In order to stay a match to people in our reality, we must change and progress in tandem. If we begin to vibrate at a different frequency and desire different things from one another, we can eventually be led in different directions. Without finding a way to regain connection or repair it, it usually means the partnership will end.

As we have spoken about, the most painful form of being on a different page takes the form of occupying different realities, but being in the same physical space. If you go to a gym, you can clearly see this separation happening in real time. Each person has their own music playing, their own workout routine and their own life. They are simply walking by each other, looking at each other and occasionally saying something to each other about the equipment.

One of those people could have just lost their spouse in a car wreck. Another could be getting married tomorrow and no one else in the gym would know it. They occupy different perceptual realities even though they are in the same space. We expect this experience when we go to the gym, but what if this is the state of your family members in the family home? What if partners occupy different perceptual realities?

What does being on the same page mean?

For a relationship to work, for connection to exist and for a couple to be close, the state of occupying different perceptual realities cannot continue. The solution is to find a way to get back *on the same page*. When I counsel couples, every conflict I see boils down to this simple thing. The two people are not on the same page. The differences between their perspectives and desires, and therefore thoughts and actions about a subject, are causing a wide vibrational gap to form between them.

In a relationship, it doesn't matter whether one person likes chocolate ice cream and the other likes vanilla. There are many differences of opinion that have no impact on a relationship, but there are also some that can have a severe impact on a relationship. For example, one person wanting an open relationship and the other wanting it to be exclusive. Or one person may never feel complete without children and the other person is fully against the idea of being anything more than just a couple. These are differences that, if not reconciled, will cause an end to the relationship. These are genuine incompatibilities.

In the world today, tolerance of differences is a social value. We love to say, "We agreed to disagree on that issue", as if it's some kind of enlightened form of acceptance. But it's not. It's nothing more than an unwillingness to try to really understand each other and find common ground. *And guess what?* Agreeing to disagree about things that have real impact on the choices you make today, and thus your direction and your future, does not work in relationships.

On a vibrational level, agreeing to disagree on a major issue is relationship suicide. This is why assessing compatibility is such a critical part of dating and forming friendships in the first place. And if you do stay in a situation where you are putting up with being on a different page in a way that is causing you pain, that is nothing more than asking for isolation.

So what does it mean to be *on the same page*? It means being in alignment with one another so you are side-by-side, headed in the same direction. It means *reaching agreement* and a place where you once again occupy the same perceptual reality. It means you do anything you can do to find a meeting of minds so that both of you reach an understanding, some kind of agreement and feel good about the direction in which you are headed. And this requires lots of effective and on-going communication.

Compromise is not the same as sacrifice

It's really important to realize that when most people say *compromise*, they really mean *sacrificing* something that you don't really want to sacrifice. This

kind of compromise never works. It's no better than agreeing to disagree. You cannot give up something that is important to you and accept what you don't want to accept. This will only lead to emotional tension in the relationship and build resentment.

So when you are trying to get on the same page in a relationship, don't think about compromise. Instead think about trying to find a way that works for both of you, where neither of you has to give up anything that is important. We can call this *the third option*. The point of trying to understand each other and see a disagreement from different perspectives is that just the act of doing this can actually change our point of view on the subject so we inevitably make different choices and go in a different direction.

Sometimes, when our partner shares their perspective, we actually see that their perspective feels more right in our hearts and so we get on the same page. Other times, they see that our perspective is actually more in alignment and so they get on the same page as us. Other times, we both get onto a totally new page, but in alignment with one another. And other times, we find that what feels true and right to our hearts is to be on different pages and end the union in our physical life embodiment. In other words, we agree to break up.

We must allow for all of these potential outcomes when we set out to get on the same page with each other. But if it's a desire to stay together, it's more likely that the universe is simply using you both as a means to create expansion in you both and so, by intentionally finding a meeting of minds, you will get on the same page.

It is a beautiful thing that partners need to be in agreement to stay together in order to re-establish their link; it's actually universal genius. It forces us to become aware and expand our mentality, to look outside the box in order to find alternatives that are potentially even better than either person had in mind to begin with. And that is why it can be a great idea to involve outside perspectives in the attempt to get on the same page. People who are external to the relationship often see alternatives or solutions that both people involved were blind to. Therefore don't be afraid to ask for outside help from a counsellor or professional to find your way if you need to.

HOW TO GET BACK ON THE SAME PAGE

If you are in a relationship that is not working, in order to get back on the same page, first identify what aspects of your life or subjects are causing

you pain. Then use the steps below to try to get back on the same page in your relationship.

1. Express to the person that you think you are on different pages about something and tell them what that something is. Then express your need to get on the same page about it and why that is a need of yours. Don't make your style of communication one of attack and defence. Instead share your concerns in a way that gives both of you a positive, solution-oriented feeling. From there, you both have to agree to sit down with the intention of getting on the same page. Chances are your partner will be up for it because they are just as uncomfortable as you are about being out of alignment with each other.
2. When trying to reach a consensus, you have to enter into the conversation genuinely wanting to find a meeting of minds rather than to win or have one person give in. It's important not to abandon yourself and really speak your authentic truth, while simultaneously allowing the other person the space for their authentic truth. The goal at first is to fully understand each other.
3. This is where you put forth your perspective. Often I suggest to people to separately write down their perspective about the situation. Essentially, each person becomes very, very clear about what page they are currently on. Then both parties come together and begin by sharing what they have written down. The most important aspect of this exercise is to become crystal clear about what you each want in this situation and what you each need. Then communicate that to each other. Ask as many questions of each other as you can so as to enhance the awareness about the situation for both of you.
4. Brainstorm different options that could bring you together in agreement. The goal in your minds must be finding a solution or option that meets the needs of you both (the third option) instead of compromise. It needs to be a win-win. In fact, if you put it like that, you can understand the energy of being on the same page. *Both parties have to feel like they have won by agreeing.* And if being on the same page means making any concessions, you must make sure that the concession is one you are genuinely OK with making. If it isn't, you'll be on the same page for three seconds before you end up on different pages again and so the exercise will have been useless. Sometimes you may want to involve other people in this process so you can consider

alternative perspectives and alternative solutions.

Trust, trust and more trust

When I say the word “trust”, just like the word “love”, chances are you only have a vague idea of what it is. It is an abstract concept that you can feel, even if you can’t tell me exactly what it is. The concept of trust plays a huge role in our relationships. For a relationship to feel good, we need to be able to trust the other person. But what the hell does that really mean? For most people trust may be important, but it is like an abstract concept so what the hell are you supposed to practically do to create trust? That’s what I’m going to clear up for you today. I’m going to explain trust in a simple way that will change your relationship to yourself and to other people forever.

So what is trust exactly? *To trust someone is to feel as if you can rely on them to capitalize on your best interests.* Sit with that definition for a moment. Let it sink in. This is as straightforward as you can get with what trust actually is. Notice I did not say that trust is about being able to rely on the fact that they will put your best interests above their own? Nor did I say that trust is making them fully responsible for your happiness. It is being able to rely on the fact that they will capitalize on your best interests. And this is what makes a relationship worth being in.

Keep in mind that as we continue to awaken and as our perspective continues to expand, our view on what actually *is* in our own best interest will change. But this doesn’t get to be your excuse to usurp someone’s idea of their own best interests.

In a relationship, you don’t get to say, “You have no idea what your actual best interest is, so I’m going to do things my way because ultimately it’s for your own good.” This is what most of our parents did. This is in fact the main way we lost trust to begin with. We so often think distrust is all about the big betrayals, when in reality the glue of distrust is other people not honouring our feeling about what our own best interest is as opposed to theirs.

This may seem abstract in a personal setting but consider this in a business setting. Imagine one company laying out their best interests in a merger and the other saying “well you don’t know what is actually the best for your company and I think that what’s best for your company is *my* terms, so we’re just gonna do that... sign on the line”. That would not be acceptable. The company would simply pack up and leave. No merger. But in our personal relationships, it’s not so easy. We have a lot more on the line. This is where boundaries are violated,

distrust occurs and resentment is created.

To understand this using an example, let's say there is a couple. Person A in the relationship decides it is in his best interests to sleep with someone he just met. But the best interests of person B is for the relationship with person A to be exclusive and committed. This means person A did not capitalize on person B's best interests. So, person B cannot trust person A. Person A is playing a zero-sum game, where one person wins and the other loses. When Person A had conflicting needs from Person B, he did not consider Person B's best interests and did not have a conversation to resolve the needs conflict in a way where both Person A and Person B's best interests are considered.

A relationship is a connection. A genuine connection is not a burden (like some people would paint it to be) it is a gift. To love someone is to take them as yourself. It is the experience of oneness in physical form. The minute you do that, your happiness can no longer be divisible from their happiness. To hurt them, is to hurt yourself. So it no longer works to capitalize on your own best interest to the detriment of theirs. Essentially the minute you get into a relationship and someone gives you that connection, it is as if they handed over the most vulnerable part of themselves to your care.

Some may call this disempowerment. I will tell you that it is quite the opposite. It is the highest form of bravery to take that risk. Both the risk of giving and taking of that vulnerable aspect of your being.

Many people who dislike the idea of trust promote the idea that a good relationship is two self-focused people who are both completely responsible for their own happiness, who occasionally meet in the middle to have sex and watch a movie or whatever together. I have never seen a successful relationship that functions like this. This is a relationship based on distrust and is functional only because there is a *mutual* agreement to stay separate and not expect each other to capitalize on each other's best interests.

Trust is the basis of a genuinely connected, successful relationship. And in that kind of agreement, two people agree that because they are unified they will hold responsibility for not only their own best interests but also their partner's.

So often the breakdown between two people is about a trust being broken. The good news about connection is that even though we can destroy trust in a relationship, trust can also be rebuilt. If you have lost someone's trust, trust can be rebuilt through demonstrating that you *can* be relied upon to be aware of and capitalize on the other person's best interests. And if you have lost trust in someone, it's also rebuilt by being brave enough to place the vulnerability of your best interests in their hands again should they actually demonstrate the desire and intention to genuinely capitalize on your best interests.

If you want to create or rebuild trust in your relationships, before you speak or act, ask yourself if your words or actions are in alignment with the other person's best interests. If your words or actions are in opposition to the other person's best interests, they quite literally should not trust you in that circumstance.

A truly stable and long-lasting relationship that feels good is built on two main commitments. The first is to commit all of your energy to the intention of maintaining a permanent connection with the other person. It is essentially this commitment: "I'm all-in". The second is the commitment to creating trust in the relationship. It is essentially this commitment: "Being all-in, I will commit to taking your best interests as part of my own." If we make the first commitment without the second, we have the recipe for trapping someone in a relationship of torture. If we make the second commitment without the first, the other person in the relationship never has the security that we won't just disconnect at some random time in response to whatever pressure the relationship happens to meet with, which is terrifying in a world where pressure is inevitable.

Commit to being all-in and commit to developing your intimacy and attunement with people to the degree that you know what their best interests actually are. From there, take other people's best interests as part of your own best interests. If you are in a relationship, it *is* always in fact in your best interests to capitalize on the other person's best interests and for them to capitalize on yours.

All human beings need contact comfort

People are preoccupied and obsessed with the idea of overriding their biology. If you look around the world today, our modern society is an example of this. Religion looks to suppress all instinctive energies within us like sexuality, hunger and desire. Our modern society has made it so that we are mentally and emotionally ready to have babies at age 30 to 40, when our bodies are in fact on the downswing of fertility at that age.

We have become, as a society, obsessed with finding a way to be immortal. We want to transcend all that makes us human. But when it comes to connection, we find ourselves in real trouble when we try to override our biology. This is because separation, shame, fear and even love are things that happen at such a primal and instinctual level that we cannot actually override them. While at the same time, our modern society has taken a dramatic swing in favour of independence as a result of the trauma that we have experienced in relationships over the course of history.

We might like to think that we can physically exist without each other, but we can't. Healthy autonomy cannot arise in a person who has no sense of safety or adequacy, which for a physical human is provided through the person's learned sense of *security of connection*. The chemical cocktail that our body releases in response to contact comfort and connection is the exact opposite of the one released in response to fear and shame. And so we need to accept that connection is our antidote. The sooner we can accept this reality about ourselves, the better. We are a social species. And more than that, we are a social species that needs *contact comfort*. Yes, I am talking about human touch.

I've never forgotten about a series of experiments that were done by a man named Harry Harlow in the 1950s. He was seeking to understand the human need for love and the critical role that it plays in both primate and human development, so he separated a group of baby rhesus monkeys from their mothers when they were born.

The baby monkeys were each caged alone in the lab and allowed no physical contact with the personnel in the lab or with each other, even though they could see the other monkeys and personnel. They immediately began exhibiting signs of distress. They clutched themselves; began rocking, staring into space as if dissociating; and biting themselves and their cages. They did not play or groom themselves and seemed to vacillate between anxiety and depression.

The babies were then assigned to one of two fake surrogate mothers. One was a model made of chicken wire that was covered in soft terrycloth. It was made to look roughly like a monkey. This surrogate did not provide any food. The other surrogate mother was also made of chicken wire, but no terrycloth. It had a crocodile looking head and provided milk from an attached baby bottle.

To say that the babies favoured the mother covered in terrycloth is an understatement. The comfort these babies received through touch contact was incomparably more important to them than even their physical hunger. They needed connection more than they needed nourishment. This is also the case for people, not just monkeys. If our need for nourishment were stronger than our need for connection with one another, we would not meet people who can't eat or sleep when they experience a painful break-up with someone they loved.

The reality is that as humans we need connection. We will never *not need* connection. And more than that, we need contact comfort to satiate our need for human touch. Even the people who are the most afraid of and hurt by human connection, need it. This is why the loneliest and most deeply hurt people experience so much torment. If we didn't absolutely need connection and were hurt by people, we would simply go on our merry way and never talk to other people again. But we can't. Instead, if we've been hurt by others, we spend our

life in a torturous tug of war between the side of us that needs other people and the side that wants to be able to have nothing to do with them.

Technology does not replace physical connection

In today's world, we are obsessed with technology. It's hard to go anywhere and find people who are genuinely engaged with one another. Most people are fully engaged instead with a technological device. Their noses are buried in their computers or cell phones. And while social media has provided incredible opportunities to be connected with each other around the world, no matter where we are, social media only provides connection *up to a degree*.

The reality is we need more than just machines and we have those needs from the time we take our first breath until we take our last one. There is not some arbitrary time in a human's life when he/she no longer needs contact comfort. Physical connection cannot be replaced and its importance can't be underestimated. We just can't get physical contact through a screen or from a distance. *We need touch*. We need vicinity. We need the comfort of being in physical contact with one another. We must consider this when we are developing connections in our life.

If touch has been something that has led to pain for us, we need to work touch back into our lives slowly and with someone that we trust. Somatic therapy is one example of something we may need to do first before we can let people into our social circle to provide contact comfort for us in our day-to-day lives. It is to be expected that we would need to be rehabilitated if unloving touch was part of our wounding, as is so typical with abuse. But we do need this rehabilitation if we want to live lives where we genuinely feel connected to other people, at peace with the world and emotionally satiated.

There does not need to be anything sexual about contact comfort. Sitting with someone so we can feel his or her body against ours or being held will suffice. We can hug, hold hands or show affection through gentle and comforting strokes, these are all examples of contact we can have that enhances our sense of connection and reduces our feelings of fear. We need to find opportunities for contact comfort and then we need to allow these experiences into our life. And we need to accept that it's futile to fight against this aspect of our biology. There won't be a day when we don't need this from each other and our sense of wellbeing is dependent upon us meeting this need for one another.

Let yourself feel the connection

The legendary Sufi mystic Rumi once said. "Your task is not to seek love. but

merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” Chances are you have had the experience of someone giving you a compliment, but instead of that compliment penetrating into your body and being able to feel it lift the way you feel, it was stuck there as if there was armour blocking it. You didn’t feel it at all.

What this experience shows us is that it is possible to not let something in even when it’s given. The same is true of connection and love. All the various positive things that people give to us could in fact fall under the category of *love*. Attention is a form of love, gifts are a form of love, help is a form of love and the list goes on. When we can’t receive these gifts, the thing we have to acknowledge is that what we really can’t receive is *love*. We can’t receive love because we were never loved unconditionally. In our experiences, there were always conditions placed on love, and conditions placed on receiving, which had led us to put our guard up against feeling connection even when it’s there.

If you distrust love to the degree that you guard against the feeling of love and connection, don’t expect yourself to trust it and simply open the door for it when it occurs. The idea of being able to do that is a nice idea, but you can’t just *decide to trust*. And it’s unfair to just expect yourself to do so. Your reality is that you have never learned not to trust because you have seen over and over again that people did not have your best interests at heart. If you say, “I trust this love I’m receiving,” you will be lying to yourself and a part of you inside will be saying, “You must think I’m some kind of absolute idiot.” If you do wish to learn how to receive love, you have to proceed with curiosity, desire and the willingness to feel out the waters, so to speak.

The first step to learning how to receive love and really be able to feel connection is recognizing *the barriers* that you have to receiving love. For people who have a hard time receiving, the number-one barrier to receiving is *distrust of the giver’s motives*. When we distrust the giver’s motives, we fear the consequences of letting down our defences and so we cannot open up to receive anything from them.

For a thing to be given genuinely, the motive behind it needs to be pure. For so many of us who have a difficult time receiving, the people in our early lives did not give love freely and in pure ways. They hurt us instead. This made it so that we either do not see or feel love at all, or when we are offered love and connection we feel a sense of panic or vulnerability instead of feeling good about it.

To let ourselves be loved and valued for who we really are would be to violate the verdict from our parents and other people that we are flawed. Their belief that we are flawed, a belief which we unfortunately adopted, justifies the

way they treated us and helps us to believe that we were not victims and were instead loved to the degree that we deserved.

To let ourselves be loved and valued for who we really are, we would have to admit to the reality that we were not unconditionally loved. If we admit that, it reinforces our fear that if we that if we do feel or think certain things we'll be neglected, abandoned and, in the most primal sense, left to die. So on a visceral level, to receive love is to face a grim retrospective reality, as well as risk to death.

People who can't receive have an especially hard time with help. We don't ask for help and we don't get much help, not because no help exists for us, but because we feel like the world is against us. We feel as if to get what we want, it will be an uphill struggle alone. This belief blinds us to even *seeing help* when it's offered to us. And on the off chance that we *do* see help being offered, we distrust it, thinking that there must be some dangerous ulterior motive. In other words, we see help as nothing more than a drawback disguised as help. Deep down, we feel unworthy of help or as if help means that we are incapable.

What kind of barrier do you have?

There are a number of kinds of internal barriers that can keep us from receiving love and really feeling connection. The first one I'll mention happens when people give us things, but it feels like they have power over us and we are vulnerable. We feel this way when the people in our life used love as leverage before. We have this barrier to receiving if love comes with a side dish of guilt, duty or debt. If this is your barrier, people in your world made love like a Trojan horse, with some negative thing always hidden inside of it.

Another kind of barrier to receiving love happens because we feel unworthy. When our parents treated us in any way that was short of loving, we came to the decision that something was wrong with us. After all, unless something really was wrong with us, why would we be treated that way? Because of this, we do not feel good enough for anyone to love us or give their energy to us.

If this is the case, we feel at a primal level that we don't deserve it. Those of us who have deserving issues when it comes to love think that we have to *earn love* or *achieve something* in order to be loved. We think that if we didn't earn something enough to deserve it, we are bad and will get punished by the universe for it. If we don't understand what we did to deserve something that someone is giving us, we start to panic. For those of you who suffer from the deserving barrier to love and connection, I want you to ask yourself this question: "What is wrong with getting something you don't deserve?"

Another barrier to receiving is exhibited by people who are addicted to

Another barrier to receiving is exhibited by people who are addicted to reciprocity. Reciprocity is the idea that something must be exchanged for mutual benefit. If you are addicted to reciprocity, you believe love must be equal. As good as it sounds, this is a misunderstanding of how love works and it's not done for a good reason. For example, for a person who fears that love is leverage, reciprocity guarantees that the other person does not have the upper hand and cannot guilt or entrap them later as a result of showing them love. We can know that we have a barrier to receiving when someone gives us something and we automatically, consciously or subconsciously, think, "What can I give him or her in return?" or "What do I owe them in return?"

If we fear loss, this can set up yet another barrier to accepting love. A common reason for being unable to receive is previous experience with losing a loved one or losing someone's love. One of the most painful experiences we can face is having love and then losing it, regardless of how we lost that love. The lost love could have been someone disapproving of you, withdrawing from you, breaking up with you, dying or something else. Regardless of the cause, the experience creates a scar and on a subconscious level we believe that it's better not to have love at all than to lose it. We believe that it's better not to accept something at all, which could be taken back.

Once you understand the kinds of barriers, then seek to recognize the specific ways that we *turn away from receiving*.

Here are some of the things you might say that are examples of how you turn away from receiving:

- I only get things from others by giving first.
- I get stiff when people hug me.
- I withdraw emotionally.
- I deflect attention away from me by changing the subject.

These are only four examples, but I assure you the list of ways that people turn away from receiving is endless. If you have a difficult time receiving, ask yourself, "How do I turn away from receiving and love and support? And how do I undermine love?"

It's important to note that all people must get love in some way. If we can't receive, we try to go through the back door to receive it. We think we must give to get, so we may help others in order to get love, or we may look our very best to get love, or we may achieve success thinking that will get us get love or we

to get love, or we may achieve success thinking that will get us get love or we may act super-nice to get love. What are you doing in order to get love?

Learning how to receive

Learning to receive starts with three basic steps. The first step is recognizing love, the second is taking love in and the third is holding onto love.

Here's how I like to explain the first step, especially to people who really don't know how to recognize love. In order to recognize love and connection, pretend that you are like a birdwatcher, but a birdwatcher for demonstrations of love or connection. All day, keep on the lookout for love being given to you as if you have to count it and keep track of it.

Solicit the help of another person to help you recognize love and connection. Sometimes, when we don't recognize love or connection, having a friend observe us in our lives does work. Often they tell us, "That person was trying to connect with you," or "I am trying to connect with you," which helps us to become aware of it.

Some time ago, I solicited the help of a friend to assist me in recognizing love. That day, someone came up to give me a long hug. I unconsciously emotionally recoiled from the hug as usual. And my friend said, "That's love," under her breath. Without her help, I would never have seen that gesture as love.

You also may not be aware of it, but people offer connection and love in all kinds of ways. They offer us gifts. They demonstrate kindness through little acts like assisting us or doing things for us. They give us compliments. They spend time with us. They want to have experiences with us. They talk to us. Every time they do this, it's essentially a bid for connection. We tend to react to these forays by either ignoring the bid, fighting against the bid, accepting the bid or not even realizing that they reached out to us in the first place.

Once you recognize love or connection, the second thing you must do is to take love in. To do this, you can practise feeling the somatic experience of it. To feel something somatically, you focus on experiencing it in the body instead of in the mind. Spend time *in the feeling of it*. This means when someone shows you love or is connected to you, really feel the feeling of that experience in your body. You can begin with the question: "What might it feel like if I could feel (*fill in the blank*)?"

Then ask yourself, "What might it feel like if I could feel that compliment or feel the feeling of their body being really with me right now?" Where in your body is there a sense of accepting the love being given as true or real? I ask you this because while your chest may have a resistance to it, your hands or knees might be wanting and accepting of it.

Allow the feeling of acceptance of love and connection to permeate your body. This means, once you identify that your hands are wanting and allowing the love, consciously imagining spreading that sensation all throughout your body. Spend time immersed in that good feeling, the abundant sensation of love. The longer you experience that sensation, the more it becomes ingrained in your brain and the easier it will be to receive in the future.

Another good way to take in a loving gesture is to consciously imagine taking it in. If someone gives you a gift, close your eyes and imagine pulling that energy straight into your heart. If someone compliments you, take a deep breath in and imagine breathing that compliment into the core of your being. If someone hugs you, imagine yourself softening to let that embrace go all the way through you. Choose to mentally dissolve your own barriers to let love in.

Once we feel love and connection, we need to practise *holding onto love*. For some of us love feels fleeting and connection feels like something that is constantly breaking. It's as if there are holes poked in our being and the love leaks out the minute it's put in. It's as if the links in the chain of connection are constantly letting go of one another in response to the slightest pressure.

When we feel this way, the natural tendency is to withdraw. But when we do this, we cap our ability to receive love and all the reserves of love that were within us drain away. Instead of withdrawing and isolating yourself when you feel this way, seek out connection. This ensures your internal love container won't be like a water well in the middle of the Sahara.

Another good technique to hold onto love is to keep reminders of love near you. Even if someone does die or even if you do break up with someone, the love between you was real. The love is not nullified by the passage of time or by changing circumstances. Think about what reminds you that you are loved? Is it a picture, an item or a quote? Keep within plain sight anything that reminds you that you are loved. This will provide ready visual proof for you that love is not scarce and it's not fleeting. Is there love in your life that is permanent? Then keep those reminders around. Is it possible that if someone withdraws their love, someone else will fill their space and offer you an even better kind of love? Stay open to this possibility.

The golden question

It's likely that there will be a degree of variability to your connection with people. Some days you will feel closer to a person than other days. We slip into a feeling of loneliness when we experience days where we feel less connected and less close to certain important people in our lives. For these times, there is a very powerful question we can ask ourselves. That question is: "What do I need

very powerful question we can ask ourselves. That question is, “What do I need in order to feel closer to this person?” We can also ask the other person: “What needs to happen or what do you need in order to feel closer to me?”

There are an unlimited number of answers that we could have to this question. For example, the answer may be, “I need you to understand this thing about me.” The answer may be, “I need us to move in together.” The answer may be, “I need them to stop invalidating the way I feel.” The answer may be, “I need to experience some physical affection.”

You will be amazed how the path to deeper and more secure levels of connection can reveal itself as a result of asking this question. What it usually does is force you to clearly see and acknowledge the area or areas in your relationship where closeness is missing for you or for them.

Once the question is asked and answered, you each then have the opportunity to do something about it. To use a metaphor, if you simply know you're in pain, it's nearly impossible to do anything about it. If you know you're in pain *because* your arm is broken, suddenly there is something you can do about it.

When taking these steps, if you don't want to give them what they need in order to feel closer to you, you have to ask yourself *why*. You have to consider either that a part of you, for some reason, doesn't want the closeness that you say you want or the thing the other person needs in order to feel close to you triggers you in some way, and that might even potentially make you feel less close to them and less willing to give them what they need.

Any time a relationship runs into conflict, this is a question that should be asked of each party: “What is it that you need in order to feel closer to them?” If you want a really solid connection with a high degree of closeness with someone, I suggest adopting this question as part of your common repertoire. For example, couples may decide to ask each other this question one time each day or parents may decide to ask their children this question once a week or friends may decide to ask each other this question once a month. People really do know what they need, regardless of whether or not they feel like it's possible to get it.

One of the best things about closeness and connection is that anything that makes the other person feel more connected to us gets us, in turn, more connection. Therefore, if we want closeness with someone, one of the fastest ways to get it is to give them what they need in order to feel closer to us.

Focus on making the connections that you do have feel strong and dependable. Really own your responsibility for maintaining the links you have with people. Do not disconnect from them and repair any disconnection you have with them as soon as there is a rupture. And select people who are willing to put forth the same level of commitment and bravery as you are.

to put forth the same level of commitment and bravery as you are.

There is no better experience that we can have on Earth than to be with a person that we can connect with at every level. It's the universal source of wellbeing. As people, there is nothing that we need more than connection. And you can never be too young, too old, too broken, too fixed or too much of anything else to find connection.

Connection has no reverence for space or for time. It can find you anywhere and it can find you at any time. It is a gift to be able to look and to listen and to feel into someone's soul, and it is a gift that always goes both ways if we have the bravery to give and to receive it.

Conclusion

Be Brave Enough to Love

We are initiated. We are apprenticed by pain. Our beauty, our purpose and our expansion is forged in the fire of our difficulties. Like a blacksmith, our suffering relieves us of our rough and tattered edges, painfully at first, until we are fully broken open. That is when our soul pours forth like water through our every thought, every word and every action. It extinguishes the fire of our pain. It weathers our curses to such a degree that they become blessings. And so, *we are free.*

All pain in this world is initiated by some kind of separation. Our initiation into this life and into this world is through separation. Separation from our Source, separation from our essence, separation from our mothers, separation from ourselves, separation from what we fear and separation from what we love. Until we ultimately find ourselves shrouded in loneliness.

We are initiated through separation so that we can find our way back to connection. Whenever we are faced with pain, we find ourselves at a crossroads. What will we choose? Will we choose to close ourselves off and by doing so to separate ourselves more? Or will we choose to open and by doing so come together with ourselves and with everything that makes up life around us?

Every moment is a choice to close or to open. Every moment is a choice to separate or to connect. Find around you those people who have chosen to open. Find in your life those people who have chosen the path of connection. And let them walk with you, hand-in-hand, into the world. Be brave enough to connect. *Be brave enough to love.*

*This is Earth.
Where each breath and step is none but a progression toward death.
Where pain is the loud and bloody birthing ground for peace.
Our cowardice saves us from nothing
in a world where bravery was never a choice.
It leaks like sweat from the pores.
It's dried in the sun of our commitment to live.
Where a trillion lives are spinning through the cosmos,
at a thousand miles per hour
with no destination in sight.
Our faith is placed in the colour of our blood,
in the salt of our tears.
Where the heart is broken and it keeps on beating just the same.
Where love is the only evidence we have that God exists;
something greater than ourselves
and the blindness with which we fumble through life.
Our cowardice saves us from nothing
in a world where bravery was never a choice.
Where no matter how careful you are, you will die.
Some of us simply arrive at death safely.
But in honest defeat,
with a life half lived.
Drenched in the sweat of our own cowardice,
having made no commitment to fully live.
Where in some distant desert a flower opens,
offering its frailty to the world.
And therein lies its strength.
A coward is incapable of love.
And so he has no evidence that God exists;
something greater than himself.
Our cowardice saves us from nothing
in a world where bravery was never a choice...
So love
because
This is Earth.
This is Earth.*

This is Earth by Teal Swan



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